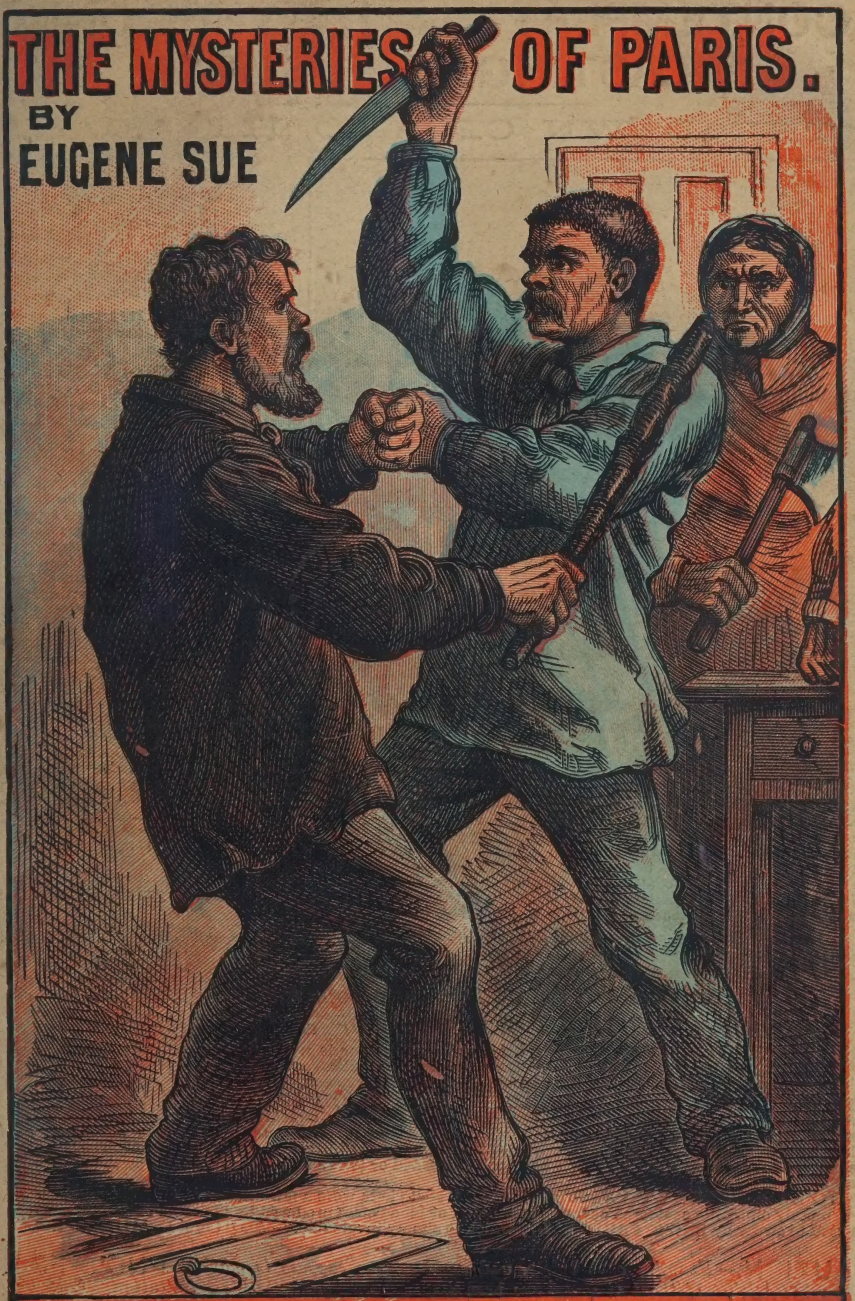
PRICE ONE SHILLING. COMPLETE

THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS.

BY

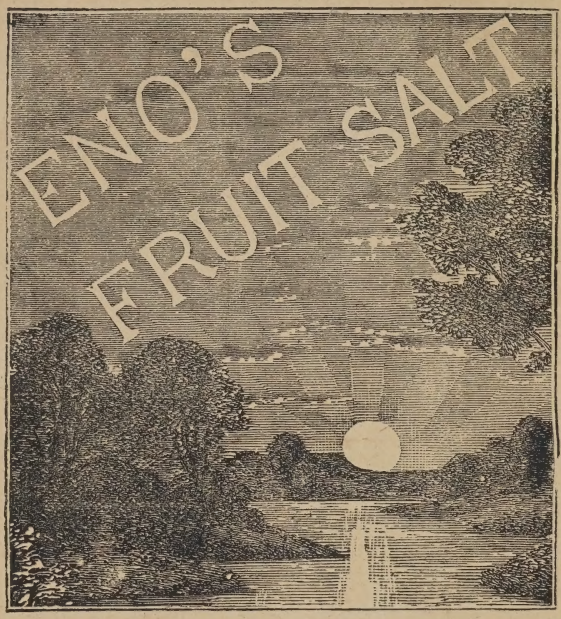
EUGENE SUE



GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS.

CONTEMPLATION IS THE ONLY LASTING PLEASURE.

THE DAWN OF ANOTHER DAY.



"Out of eternity this new day is born,
Into eternity at night doth return,
Behold it aforetime no eyes ever did,
So soon it for ever from all eyes is hid,
Here hath been dawning another blue day,
Think, wilt thou let it slip useless away?"
TENNYSON.

TO THE WISE.—"Nor love thy life, nor hate; but what thou livest, live well."—MILTON.

TO THE FOOLISH.—A man without wisdom lives in a fool's paradise.

ADVICE TO WOULD-BE SUICIDES—POLITICS, &c.—Many hold their lives so cheap as to commit the terrible crime of suicide. Instead, however, of recklessly attaining that end by poison, the rope, pistol, or knife, &c., we recommend the following modes—as being more natural, and quite as effectual. Wear thin shoes on damp nights, and keep every apartment air-tight. Keep the mind in a round of unnatural excitement, by politics (to enable you to produce election fever), trashy novels, and gamblins speculations, either on cards, racing, or stock. Go to operas, minstrel concerts, theatres, in all sorts of weather, and, when steaming hot with perspiration, rush into the cold air with your coat or shawl hanging over your arm. In balls dance till exhausted, and then go home in your pumps through the damp streets and air. Sleep on feather beds in the smallest and closest room in the house. Eat immoderately of hot and stimulating diet. Never drink anything weaker than strong tea, nor anything stronger than neat whisky or brandy. Teach your children early to drink strong coffee, chew or smoke tobacco. Marry in a hurry, and growl and repent for the rest of your life. Never masticate your food, but bolt it like a serpent. Follow any exciting or unhealthy business, if money can be made at it, so that your friends may console themselves for your early death. Never go to bed before midnight, and then with a full stomach. Eat little niceties, such as pastries, unripe fruit, lunch, wine, &c., between meals. Be always in a passion, either of anger or love.

WHEN AILING pay no attention to the regulation of your diet, exercise, or occupation. Always avoid ENO'S FRUIT SALT. Attempt no conformity to the laws of life, but gormandise to your utmost bent, and you will be surprised to learn of the body what

"A frail and fickle tenement it is,
Which, like the brittle glass that measures time,
Is often broke ere half its sands are run."

What higher aim can man attain than conquest over human pain?

DON'T BE WITHOUT A BOTTLE OF ENO'S FRUIT SALT.

BILE-LADEN BLOOD, HEALTHY BILE.—When the liver is not making healthy bile, or insufficient quantity, the blood becomes impure—the groundwork of disease, and produces constipation, dyspepsia, biliousness, headaches, &c. ENO'S FRUIT SALT is the best remedy.

HOW TO AVOID THE INJURIOUS EFFECTS OF STIMULANTS.—Experience shows that mild ales, port wine, dark sherries, sweet champagne, liqueurs, and brandy are all very apt to disagree, while light wines, and gin or whisky largely diluted with soda-water will be found the least objectionable. ENO'S FRUIT SALT is peculiarly adapted for any constitutional weakness of the liver. It possesses the power of reparation when digestion has been disturbed or lost, and places the invalid on the right track to health.

ENO'S FRUIT SALT *VERSUS* BRANDY.—"There were a few attacks of mild dysentery, brought mainly on by ill-considered devotion to brandy, or biliousness produced by the same cause. For the latter we used to swear by ENO'S FRUIT SALT, which is simply invaluable."—*See* "Coral Lands," Vol. I.

CAUTION.—*Examine each bottle, and see that the capsule is marked* ENO'S FRUIT SALT. *Without it you have been imposed on by a worthless imitation. Sold by all Chemists.*

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THE

MYSTERIES OF PARIS

BY EUGENE SUE

UNABRIDGED EDITION

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS
BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL
GLASGOW AND NEW YORK
1887

COMPLETE EDITIONS,

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME.

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THE THREE MUSKETEERS & TWENTY YEARS AFTER. By ALEXANDER DUMAS.
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THE WANDERING JEW. By EUGENE SUE.
TEN THOUSAND A YEAR. By SAMUEL WARREN.

THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS.

MORNING.

CHAPTER I.

THE BOOZING KEN.

ONE cold, rainy evening, towards the end of October, 1838, a man of athletic build, wearing an old broad-brimmed straw hat and a ragged slop, serge shirt, which came down over the hem of trousers of the same stuff, crossed the Pont-au-Change, and dived into the City ward of Paris, a maze of dark, narrow, and crooked streets, which spreads from the Palace of Justice to Notre Dame Cathedral.

Though of small extent, and closely watched, this district is the Mint, or haunt of a great number of malefactors, who swarm in the low drinking-dens. A convict who has done his time (worked out his sentence), going by the name of Ogre, or a woman of the same degradation, called an Ogress, most often keeps these houses, frequented by the dregs of the Paris people, such as ticket-of-leavers, thieves, and cut-throats. When a crime is committed, the police, so to say, cast the net into these sewers, and almost always drag out the guilty scoundrels.

On this night, the wind, we say, fiercely swept through the City's cheerless gullies. The wan and flickering light of the street-lamps, swinging from lines, danced by reflection in the black water of the gutter midway in the muddy road.

The sooty houses, broken by a few worm-eaten window-frames, so overhung as to almost touch eaves, the streets being so narrow. Dark and filthy alleys led to flights of steps even darker and more filthy, while being so steep it was hard to climb up them even by help of a rope iron-cramped to the sweating walls.

Some of the ground-floors were shops of coal-dealers, greengrocery-men, or cheap butchers. Notwithstanding the paltry show of stock, the fronts of the windows were nearly all iron-barred, so much did the shop-keepers dread the "snatches" of boy-thieves of the neighbourhood.

The man we noticed slackened his pace on reaching the Rue aux Feves, situated in the heart of the City, feeling that he was "on his own ground."

It was very dark, and the strong gusts of rain lashed the walls.

In the far-off, ten o'clock rang from the Palace of Justice clock.

Women were ambushed under projecting windows, as in deep and lightless caves; some hummed ends of popular songs, others talked together in under-tones, and others again stood mute and motionless, listlessly watching the rain fall. The serge-shirt man, abruptly stopping in front of one of these unfortunates, who was silent and sad, grabbed her by the arm.

"Good arternoon this ever-ning, Sweet-throttle (La Goualeuse)," said he.

"G—good evening, Slasher (Chourineur)," faltered she, drawing back. "Please don't hurt me."

This man, a returned convict, had been named as above at the hulks.

"Glad I come across you," said he; "I'm down on my luck! You're the very girl to stand some redfire (brandy)—or, strike me comical! I'll make you cut capers without music!"

"I'm out of money," said the girl, trembling; for this man was the terror of the neighbourhood.

"If your purse is empty, the Ogress of the Blue-ruin Bung will give you tick on the strength of your pretty face."

"Oh, no; I already owe her for the hire of the clothes I have on!"

"Oh! you want to lawyer me out of it, do you?" exclaimed the Slasher, darting furiously forward in pursuit of La Goualeuse, who took refuge in a dark alley.

"No, you don't. I've you!" exclaimed the ruffian, after the interval of a few seconds, as he seized in his powerful hand one altogether as soft and slight.

"You shall dance for it," a masculine voice broke in.

"Hullo! a man. Is it you, Red Arm? Speak out, if it is, and don't grasp so infernally hard; I'm up your passage, I know; so I suppose it's you."

"It is not Red Arm," replied the voice.

"The —— it ain't! As you are not one of my crowd, you'll soon see something drop!" cried the Slasher. "But whose small paw have I hold of here? I'll be blowed if it ain't a girl's!"

"The fellow to this!" replied the voice; and, under the soft, delicate skin of the hand, which now suddenly and violently seized him by the throat, the Slasher felt himself grasped by nerves and muscles of iron.

La Goualeuse, sheltered at the bottom of the alley, had lightly sprung up several stairs; she now stopped an instant, and cried out to her unknown defender—

"Thanks, thanks, sir, for having taken my part. The Slasher struck me because I would not pay for his brandy; but I think

he was only funning. Now I am safe. Let him go, I pray, and beware of him—he is the Slasher."

"And suppose it is the Slasher; I'm a milling cove who knuckles under to no buffer near my weight!" For some seconds nothing was heard save the sounds of a deadly strife.

"S'help me, you must want me to do for you," exclaimed the Slasher, making a fierce effort to throw off his adversary, whom he found unusually powerful. "It's all right! you'll pay for La Goualeuse and yourself together!" He gnashed his teeth with rage.

"Pay! aye, that will I," said the Unknown; "and it'll be in pounds!"

"If you don't let go my necktie I'll bite your nose off," said the Slasher, in a choking voice.

"My nose is too short, my boy, and there is not light enough for you to see it."

"Then come under the hanging glim, and I'll show you."

"Come on, then," said the Unknown, and let's have a squint at the whites of each other's eyes."

Upon which, throwing himself upon the Slasher, still grasping his collar, the stranger forced him through the head of the alley into the street, which was barely lighted by a lonely lamp.

The Slasher staggered, but speedily recovering his balance, he threw himself with fury upon the other, whose shapely and slender figure by no means foretold the incredible strength he had displayed.

The struggle was short, for the ruffian, although of athletic make and of first-rate ability in rough-and-tumble fights, found he had met his master.

The stranger *gave him the crook* twice with marvellous dexterity, and he measured his length each time on the ground.

Still unwilling to admit the superiority of his adversary, the Slasher, burning with rage, returned to the charge. Thereupon the defender of La Goualeuse, suddenly changing his mode of attack, showered upon the cut-throat's head a succession of blows, as weighty and crushing as though delivered by an iron gauntlet.

These blows, worthy of the envy and admiration of the most celebrated London boxers, were, moreover, so completely out of the French mode of fighting, that the Slasher was mentally as well as bodily stunned by them, and for the third time he fell upon the pavement, muttering—"I'm floored; I've had enough pork for my shilling!"

"If he gives up, don't punish him; have pity upon him," said La Goualeuse, who, during all this struggle, had kept her stand at the steps at the court's head.

Then she added, in astonishment—"Oh, who are you? Excepting *the Schoolmaster* or *the Skeleton*, there is not a man from the Rue Saint Eloi to Notre Dame who can stand up to the Slasher. I truly thank you, sir. Alas! but for you he would have beaten me."

The stranger, instead of replying to the girl, listened attentively to her voice. Never had he heard softer, fresher, or more silvery tones; he endeavoured to distinguish the speaker's features, but the night was too dark, and the light afforded by the lamp too feeble.

After remaining motionless for some time, the Slasher shook his arms and legs, and at length sat up.

"Look out," cried La Goualeuse, again seeking safety in the alley, and pulling her protector by the arm; "pray take care! he will try to be revenged."

"Don't be alarmed, my girl," said the other; "there's plenty more *beats* in the same basket others came out of."

The Slasher, who heard these words, replied, speaking to the stranger,

"Oh no, thank'ee; I'm half choked, and have one peeper bunged up quite enough for to-day; I had rather not call again, I thank you: if I meet you another time, however——"

"What! not satisfied? Do you grumble?" asked the stranger, in a threatening tone.

"No, no; I don't grumble; you are a plucky cove," said the ruffian, in a sulky tone, and yet with that sort of respect with which physical strength always inspires such men. "You have settled me; and except the Skeleton with his iron bones, and the Schoolmaster, who could eat three of them big statues in the park for breakfast, no one till now could brag of having set his foot on my neck."

"What do you want to make out of it?"

"What? Why, I have found my governor, that's all. You will have yours some day or another; sooner or later every one has his pound's worth. What is sure at all events is this, that now that you've licked the Slasher you can ride your high horse in the City. All the girls of the town will be spooney with you, will be your slaves; and neither Ogre nor Ogress will dare refuse you tick and trust. Oh, that's something. But who are you, I say? You patter flash like a family man. If you are a prig I don't travel with you. I have splashed, it is true, because when blood's up I see *red*, and I must strike; but I have paid for my slashing by my fifteener. My time is out. I am no longer spotted, I owe nothing to the big-wigs, and I have never been on the tuppenny-wiper lay. Ask La Goualeuse if I have."

"That is true," said the girl; "he is no thief."

"Well, come and drink a glass, and you shall know who I am," said the Unknown. "Come, don't nurse a grudge against me; come."

"That's the ticket! Bear malice? not a bit of it! You are best man, make no mistake; you can handle your mawleys right splittingly. Heavens! what a hail-storm of right and left rattlers that was last round! Thunder! how they rattled on my coke. I never felt anything like it; your fists fell like sledge hammers! That's quite a new move to me; you must put me up to that dodge—will you?"

"Oh! I'll begin again this moment, if you choose?"

"Oh, no, not upon me again; not upon me, thank you all the same. My head is dizzy yet. But are you in with Red Arm, being as you were in the alley to his crib?"

"Red Arm!" said the stranger, as if disagreeably surprised by the question; but he only added, in a careless way, "Can't say I know Red Arm; is he the only chap living in the house here? It rained in torrents, and I walked up the court to save my *new* clothes! I caught you hammering the poor wench, I pitched into you—and there you are!"

"All right! it's none of my 'biz.' Red Arm keeps a room up here, but he has no settled home, generally in his 'bring' on the Champs Elysées. Enough of him. Look here," he went on, "La Goualeuse, I'll take my *oats* that you're a good sort. Now, I weren't going to hurt you. You know blamed well that I never cracked a line-back, 'less it bit first: it was only my fun. Never mind; it was a harnsome thing of you not to egg on this buffer to give me a double dose, when he had me down, and I couldn't a' helped myself. You shall come on and have a drain with us, the gent's a-going to stand. Talking of drink, my right-un," he added, to the Unknown, "what do you say now if, instead o' lushing, we have some cookies and spuds (taters) in the White Rabbit; it's the nearest strap house?"

"That's me! I'll pay for the grub. Come along, Sweet-throat?" said the stranger.

"Thank you, sir," she answered; "but seeing you fighting took all my appetite away."

"Rubbish! you will pick up once you've had a bite," said the Slasher; "the White Rabbit's got the biggest kind of name for cookery."

The three personages, now upon the best terms with one another, directed their steps towards the tavern.

During the strife between the Unknown and the Slasher, a charcoal-seller, of colossal frame, ambushed in another alley, had looked with anxiety upon the chances of the fight; but still, as we have seen, without lending the slightest aid to either of the adversaries. When the Unknown, the Slasher, and La Goualeuse, proceeded towards the tavern, the charcoal-man followed them.

The ruffian and La Goualeuse first entered the tavern; the Unknown followed them, when the charcoal-man approached him, and whispered in German, in tones of respectful remonstrance, "Be on your guard, *your Highness!*"

The Unknown waved his hand carelessly, and rejoined his companions. The charcoal-man did not go far from the drinking-den; listening attentively, he peeped from time to time through a hole that had been scraped in the lather with which the inside of the windows of such haunts is usually coated.

CHAPTER II.

THE OGRESS.

THE White Rabbit, situated about the middle of the Rue du Feves, occupies the ground-floor of a lofty house, the front of which is composed of two sash windows. Before the door of a dark arched passage hangs an oblong lamp, on the cracked glass of which are the words, "Beds for Single Men, 1½d."

The Slasher, the stranger, and La Goualeuse entered a large, low room, with a smoked ceiling, crossed with black rafters, and lighted by the reddish flame of a dismal hanging lamp. The cracked walls, once coated with plaster, were covered here and there with odd and not very delicate designs and flash phrases. The trodden-clay floor was splashed with mud; a heap of straw, which did duty as a carpet, was strewed at the foot of the counter, situated on the right of the door beyond the lamp.

On each side of this apartment stood six tables, which, with their accompanying benches, were fastened at one end to the wall. At the far end of the room was a door leading to the kitchen; on the right, near the counter, was another, opening on a passage communicating with the wretched room in which the Ogress lodged her customers at three halfpence per night.

A few words will serve to describe the Ogress and her guests. Known by the name of Mother Ponisse, her triple profession consisted in letting lodgings, keeping a groggery, and lending clothes on hire to the wretched street-walkers of this vile neighbourhood.

She was about forty years of age, tall, stout-built, robust, ruddy-visaged, and gifted with a beard. Her hoarse and masculine voice, and huge arms and hands, announced uncommon strength; an old red and yellow handkerchief was tied over her cap; a rabbit-skin shawl across her bosom was knotted behind her back; her green woollen gown did not conceal black wooden shoes, often burnt by the small stove which warmed her feet; and to complete the picture, her complexion was coppery, and inflamed by abuse of strong liquors.

The zinc-covered bar was ornamented with various pewter and tin measures, and on a shelf were several glass bottles fashioned to represent the Emperor at full length. These bottles contained liquors, coloured red and green, and known by the names of "Drops for the Brave," "Essence of Lily of the Valley," and the like.

A huge black cat, with green eyes, sat near the Ogress, and seemed the familiar demon of the place; while, by a contrast which would seem impossible, did we not know that the human soul is an impenetrable and mysterious abyss, a blessed palm branch, purchased at church by the Ogress, was stuck over the case of an old cuckoo clock.

Two marvellously ill-favoured fellows, with long beards, and almost in rags, scarcely touched the wine-measure they had been served with, and whispered together with an air of anxiety. One of them especially, very pale, almost livid, frequently pulled over his eye-brows the shabby Greek cap he wore, and kept his left hand almost constantly concealed, and, when obliged to use it, did so with a fearful caution.

Farther on sat a youth, barely sixteen years of age, with beardless, leaden, and haggard face, and a dead, dull glance; long black hair straggled down his neck. This youth, the very type of precocious vice, was smoking a short black pipe. With his back against the wall, both hands in the pockets of his blouse, and his legs extended on the bench, he only ceased to smoke when he stopped to sip at the can of brandy before him. The other customers, men and women, presented nothing remarkable; their expression was ferocious or brutish, their mirth vulgar or licentious, their silence sullen or stupid.

Such were the guests of the White Rabbit, when the Slasher, La Goualeuse, and the Unknown entered.

These three personages play parts too important in this narrative not to be prominently brought before the reader's eye.

The Slasher was a man of tall stature and athletic make, with light hair, approaching to white, bushy eyebrows, and enormous red whiskers. Exposure to the weather, poverty, and the rude labours of the prison ships had bronzed his countenance with that dark olive tint which is peculiar to convicts. Notwithstanding his terrible surname, the features of this man expressed rather brutal hardihood and unconquerable boldness, than ferocity.

We have already said that he wore a shabby blue serge shirt, and trousers of the same material, and one of those straw hats fancied by men employed in timber-yards, and as long-shoremen.

Sweet-throat was not over sixteen and a half years old. A forehead of the purest and whitest surmounted a face perfectly oval, and of angelic expression; a fringe of eyelids, so long that they curled slightly, half veiled large blue eyes of a melancholy expression. The down of early youth graced her cheeks, lightly coloured with a blush-red tinge. Her small, rosy mouth, which hardly ever smiled —her nose, straight, and delicately chiselled —her rounded chin, formed, in their combined expression, an outline of that perfect beauty which we see in Raphael's beauties. On each side of her fair temples was a band of hair of the most splendid auburn hue, which descended in luxuriant ringlets half way down her cheeks, and was then turned back behind the ear, a portion of which—ivory shaded with carnation—was thus visible, and then lost itself under the close folds of a broad blue-checkered cotton kerchief, its ends twisted round and round so as to avoid making a bulging knot. Her graceful neck, of dazzling whiteness, was encircled by a small necklace of grain coral. Her gown, of brown stuff, though much too large, could not wholly conceal a charming form, supple and round as a reed; a worn-out, small, orange-coloured shawl, with green fringe, was crossed over her bosom.

The melodious voice of La Goualeuse had made a strong impression on her unknown defender. In truth, that voice, so gentle, so harmoniously modulated, had an attraction so irresistible, that even the gang of villains and "social evils," among whom this unfortunate girl lived, would often beg her to sing, listening to her with rapture.

La Goualeuse had another name, given, doubtless, on account of the maiden purity of her countenance; she was also called *Fleur-de-Marie*, which in slang signifies the *Virgin*.

We wish we could make our readers comprehend the singular impression given us, when, in the midst of this infamous vocabulary, in which the words signifying theft and murder are even more hideous and frightful than the things signified, we met with the metaphor, so softly, so sweetly, so tenderly pious—*Fleur-de-Marie*.

Is it not like a beauteous lily, uplifting the perfumed snow of its spotless chalice on a field of carnage?

Strange contrast! marvellous accident! The inventors of this horrid language have thus risen to the elevation of poetry, and imparted another charm to the chaste thought which they wished to express: for is it not horrible, a thing to be reflected on by every man who thinks, that these outcasts are numerous and united enough to have a language, as well as customs, and a district of a town, peculiar to themselves?

The defender of La Goualeuse (we shall name this person Rudolph) appeared to be about thirty-six years of age; his figure, tall, graceful, and perfectly proportioned, did not, however, betray the surprising vigour he had displayed in the struggle with the athletic Slasher.

It would be difficult to assign a decided character to the countenance. Certain wrinkles on his forehead betokened a man habitually contemplative, and yet the firm mould of his mouth, the haughty and imperious carriage of his head, indicated the man of action, whose physical strength and prompt boldness would always awe the mass.

In his struggle with the ruffian Rudolph had shown neither anger nor hatred. Confiding in his strength, address, and activity, he had only shown disdain for the brutish animal he had vanquished.

We give the finishing touches to Rudolph's physical portrait by saying, that his fine, regular features seemed too beautiful for a man's; his eyes were large, soft, brown ones, his nose aquiline, his chin somewhat prominent, and his chestnut hair of the same

shade as his proudly arched brows and thin, silky moustache.

In other respects, the language and manners, which he sported with incredible ease, gave him a complete resemblance to the other guests of the Ogress. His slender neck, elegantly formed as that of the Indian Bacchus, was encircled by a black neck-cloth, negligently knotted, the ends of which fell upon the collar of a blue blouse. A double row of nails weighted his heavy shoes. In fact, nothing except his hands, which were of a most aristocratic shape, distinguished him from the ordinary cutsomers here; though, in a moral sense, his air of resolution and bold serenity placed an immense distance between them.

On entering, the Slasher, clapping one of his heavy hands on Rudolph's shoulder, exclaimed—"Three cheers for the chap that made the Slasher a mouse in the straw! Yes, friends, this youngster has mastered me, and no mistake. This is news for all who want broken ribs or cracked crowns, including the Schoolmaster and the Skeleton, who this time will find their match, and I'll back him for what you like!"

On these words, from the Ogress to the lowest frequenter of the tap, all present contemplated the Slasher's conqueror with a fearful respect. Some, moving their glasses and jugs to the end of the table at which they were seated, hastened to make room for Rudolph, if he should choose to sit beside them; others approached the Slasher to question him in whispers concerning this Unknown, who had made his entry into *their world* in so triumphant a manner.

At length the Ogress, directing on Rudolph one of her most gracious smiles, actually rose from the bar (a thing unheard of, and almost deemed fabulous in the annals of the White Rabbit) to take the orders of her guest, and know what he desired to have for the refreshment of his party—an attention which she did not bestow either on the Schoolmaster or the Skeleton, two dyed-in-the-wool ruffians, who made even the Slasher tremble.

One of the two men with the evil aspect, whom we have described (he with the very pale face, who hid his left-hand, and continually pulled his cap over his brows), leaned towards the Ogress, who was carefully wiping the table where Rudolph had taken his seat, and asked her, in a hoarse tone: I say, mother, did the Big Cripple look in to-day?"

"No," said Mother Ponisse.

"Nor yesterday?"

"Yes, he was here yesterday."

"Was Calebasse with him—the daughter of Martial, who was guillotined? You know them Martials of Raker's Island?"

"What game are you up to to-day? D'ye think I'm in police pay, and act as spy on my customers?" said the Ogress, in a brutal voice.

"I have an appointment to-night with the Big Cripple and the Schoolmaster," replied the fellow; "we have a job on."

"That's your own look-out—a pack of leeches as you are!"

"Leeches!" said the bandit, with an air of irritation; "it is by such bloodsuckers that you get your living."

"You'd better hold your tongue, my leary cove," cried the Ogress, with a menacing air, lifting, as she spoke, the pitcher she held in her hand. The man went grumbling to his seat.

"Perhaps the Big Cripple stayed to *settle his score* with young Germain, who lives in the Rue du Temple," said he to his companion.

"What! do they mean to *see it out* with him?"

"No, not quite, only to give him a lesson. It seems he has been blowing the gaff in the Nantes job, so Red Arm says."

"That is the Big Cripple's luck! he's only just left prison, and has his hands full already."

Fleur-de-Marie had followed the Slasher into the tavern. Responding to a friendly nod given to him by the young scamp with a jaded appearance, the Slasher said,

"Why, Barbillon! soaking your clay with the old stuff?"

"To be sure! I would rather starve, and go bare-foot any day, than be without a rinse for my throttle, and *weed* for my pipe," said the young man, in a cracked, worn-out voice, without changing his position, and puffing out immense clouds of tobacco smoke.

"Good evening, Fleur-de-Marie," said the Ogress, drawing near La Goualeuse, and scanning with a prying eye the young girl's clothes which she had lent her. After this scrutiny, she said, with an air of coarse satisfaction: "It's quite a treat to lend things to you; you are as clean as a kitten; indeed, I would never have trusted that pretty orange shawl to such dirty creatures as Draggletail and Fatty; but then haven't I brought you up since you came here six weeks ago? I must say for you, there is not a tidier piece in all the City, though you are too dumpish, too dismal, and too shame-faced, Miss Icicle. You are such a fresh 'un as yet, that that's not to be wondered at. Lord! wait till we see you three or four years hence! when you're an old stager; then there won't be such a dasher in the whole Rue aux Feves."

Goualeuse sighed, hung down her head, and said nothing.

"Hollo!" said Rudolph to the Ogress, "split me, if you hain't got a holy bough over your cuckoo, mother!" pointing with his finger to the consecrated branch behind the old clock.

"You heathen, would you have us live like dogs?" coolly replied this horrible woman. Then, addressing Fleur-de-Marie, she added: "Come, now, Sweet-throat, ain't you going to sweeten us one of your little squalls?"

"We're first going to have supper, Mother Ponisse," said the Slasher.

"Well, my brick, what can I serve you with?" said the Ogress to Rudolph, whose favour she was desirous to obtain, and whose support she might, perhaps, require.

"Ask the Slasher: he sings out, and I pay."

"Well then," said the Ogress, turning to the other, "what will you have for supper, you bad lot?"

"Two *tanners* of wine, three slack-baked busters (small loaves), and a bag of mystery,"* answered the Slasher, after luxuriously feasting his mind by mentally turning over the items of the White Rabbit's bill of fare.

"By George, you've a jolly sweet tooth, anybody can see, and never get tired of punch's puzzles."

"Now then, Sweet-throat," said the Slasher, "are you peckish yet?"

"No, Slasher."

"Would you like anything better than a sassinger, my girl?" said Rudolph.

"Oh, no, thank you; I have no appetite."

"Why don't you look at my *master*, girl?" said the Slasher, with a broad grin. "What! daren't you look at him between the eyes?"

The poor girl blushed, but did not look at Rudolph.

After a few moments the Ogress herself placed on the table a pitcher of wine, bread, and a huge bag of mystery, of which we will not attempt to give an idea to the reader, but which appeared to be highly relished by the Slasher, who exclaimed—

"Hookey Walker! what a dish! what a glorious dish! it's a regular bus. There is something in it to everybody's taste: Sprat's wife, who likes fat, can have it; so can Jack, who likes lean; as well as those who choose sugar, and those who prefer pepper—drumsticks of fowls, biscuit, fish-tails, chop-bones, pastry-crust, fried eels, vegetables, woodcocks' heads, cheese, and salad! Why don't you eat, La Goualeuse? it is capital! You don't mean for to say you've been to a wedding-feast to-day?"

"No more than on other days. I ate this morning, as usual, my ha'porth of milk and ha'porth of bread."

The entrance of another person into the cabaret interrupted the conversation, and caused all to look up in the direction of the new comer. He was a middle-aged man, active and robust, wearing a loose jacket and a close-fitting cap. Quite at home to the usages of the place, he ordered supper in the familiar slang. The new comer so placed himself as to be able to watch the two ill-looking fellows who had asked after the Big Cripple and the Schoolmaster. He did not take his eyes off them; but, in consequence of their position, the latter could not observe the marked attention of which they were the subject.

The conversation, momentarily interrupted, was resumed. In spite of his boldness, the Slasher showed a kind of deference to Rudolph, and did not dare to treat him with familiarity.

"Upon my soul!" said he to Rudolph, "although I have had a cheap (unprofitable) trip for it, I am glad to have met with you."

"Because you relish the sassidge?"

"Wery like; but still more because I long to see you take down the Schoolmaster. To see the *bounce* shaken out of him who has always crowed over me would do my heart good."

"Oh, that's your little game, is it? Do you suppose that for your sport I shall jump at the Schoolmaster like a bull-dog?"

"No, but he'll be at you in a jiffy when he is told that you are a better man than he," chuckled the Slasher, rubbing his hands.

"Well, I have brads enough left to give him full change," said Rudolph, in a careless tone. Then, he added: "It is not weather fit for a dog: what say you to a pot of brandy, with a stir of sugar?"

"That's your sort!" said the Slasher.

"And, that we may be better acquainted, we will let on to each other who we are," added Rudolph.

"The Albino, otherwise the Slasher, returned convict, lighterman on the rafts at St. Paul's Quay; frozen in the winter, roasted in the summer, from twelve to fifteen hours a day in the water; half man, half frog; that's my picter," said Rudolph's companion, making him a military salute with his left hand. "Well, now, and you, my master, being your first turn-out in the City—I don't mean anything offensive; but you ran at me like a bull, and made a drum of my hide. Blazes! what a devil's tattoo you did beat! and above all, those smacks in the eye as a wind-up! I shall never forget them—what a rattling peal!—ding-dong, one-two! But you have some other trade besides hammering."

"I am a fan-painter, and my name is Rudolph."

"A fan-painter! Oh! that accounts for your having such white hands," said the other. "Not that that matters; if you are a specimen of your comrades, it would not be a bad spec to learn your trade. But, as you are a workman, what brings you to a flash-ken in the City, where there are only prigs and kinchens and jailbirds like me, who cannot show anywhere else? This is no place for you; workmen have their own resorts, and don't know man's talk."

"I come here because I like good company."

"At-chou!" sneezed the Slasher, shaking his head with a doubtful air. "I met you in Red Arm's court; but that's neither here nor there. You say you don't know him?"

"What do you mean by sticking your Red Arm under my nose? Confound Red Arm!"

"Hold, master! Perhaps you distrust me; but you are wrong. If you like, I will tell you my history; but it must be on condition

* "Bags of mystery," *alias* "Punch's puzzles," in English cant, are the kind of sausages whose skins are filled with the various remnants left from the servants' table in noblemen's and rich men's mansions.

that you teach me how to use my fists after the fashion you tackled me. What say you?"

"Tis a bargain, Slasher; you shall tell me your history, and La Goualeuse shall tell us hers also."

"Very well," replied the Slasher. "It is not fit weather to keep a cop (policeman) out besides, it will amuse us. Are you agreeable, Goualeuse?"

"Oh, yes: but my story will not take long to tell," said Fleur-de-Marie.

"And you will also tell us your history, friend Rudolph?" added the Slasher.

"Yes, for I'll lead off!"

"Fan-painter!" said La Goualeuse; "that must be a very pretty trade!"

"How much can you earn at the crank if you stick close to it?" asked the Slasher.

"I am on piece-work," responded Rudolph; "my best days are worth three francs, sometimes four; but that is in summer, when the days are long."

"And you take it easy sometimes—eh, lazy-bones?"

"Yes, so long as I have money, though I don't chuck it away. First, I pay fivepence for my night's furnished lodging."

"Excuse me, *your highness*, who'd a'thought I'd set eyes on a price of a fippenny rope?" said the Slasher, raising his hand to his cap.

The words, spoken in an ironical tone, caused Rudolph to smile imperceptibly; and he replied: "Yes! I like to be clean and comfortable."

"Here's a lord of the land for you! a swell for the Bank!" exclaimed the Slasher, "who pays a tizzy a night for his bed!"

"Then," continued Rudolph, "there's two penny screws of 'bacca, that's neves yennips (sevenpence); early coffee and loaf an' butter, ninepence; grub about a tanner; pennorth of brandy, and there you are; it stands me about one-and-six a day. I don't have to keep up steam all the week, but take my lay-off as much as I like."

"But your family?" said La Goualeuse.

"The cholera *downed* 'em," replied Rudolph.

"And what were your parents?" asked La Goualeuse.

"Dealers in old clo' and marine stores, under the pillars of the Market-place."

"And what did you get, when you sold what they left you?" asked the Slasher.

"I was too young, so my keeper did that: and when I came of age, he brought me in his debtor thirty francs; that was my inheritance."

"And who do you work for?" demanded the Slasher.

"His name is Gauthier, in the Rue des Bourdonnais—a beastly, stingy thief: a miser! who would almost as soon lose his eyes as pay his workmen fair. That's the best character I can give him; if it is lost don't come to my office again for it! I learned my trade under him from the age of fifteen; I have a good number in the conscription and my name is Rudolph Durand. That is my history."

"And now it is your turn, Goualeuse," said the Slasher. "I keep my story for the last," as a sort o' tit-bit!"

CHAPTER III.

SWEET-THROAT'S STORY.

"BEGIN with the beginning," said the Slasher, not to be "choused."

"Yes, with your parents," added Rudolph.

"I never knew them," said Fleur-de-Marie.

"Ha, ha! Goualeuse, that is rich," said the Slasher. "You and I come of the same family."

"What, you too, Slasher, lone?"

"Yes; an orphan of the streets of Paris, the same as you were, my girl."

"Who brought you up, then, Goualeuse?" asked Rudolph.

"I do not know, sir; as far back as I can recollect, when I think I was about seven or eight years of age, I lived with an old one-eyed woman, whom they call Screech-Owl, because she had a hooked nose, a very round green eye, and altogether resembled an owl who had lost an eye."

"Ha! ha! ha! I think I see her now, the old owl!" laughed the Slasher.

"This old one-eyed woman," resumed Fleur-de-Marie, "sent me to sell barley-sugar at night on the Pont Neuf; but that was only a cloak for begging: and when I did not bring her at least sixpence, she gave me a beating instead of my supper."

"And are you certain that the female was not your mother?" inquired Rudolph.

"I am quite certain; for she often taunted me with having neither father nor mother, and always said that she picked me up in the street."

"So," said the Slasher, "you danced instead of eating, when you did not pick up a tizzy?"

"Yes, and afterwards had to lie upon straw spread upon the ground, where I almost perished with bitter cold."

"I don't doubt it," cried the Slasher; "straw is a regular freezer! a dung heap is a hundred times better; but then people don't like the smell of you, and have the cheek to say, Oh, the nasty brute! kick him out some' un!"

"This joke made Rudolph smile, while Fleur-de-Marie resumed: "The next morning the Screech-Owl gave me the same allowance for breakfast as for supper, and sent me to Montfaucon to look for worms or fish-bait; for during the day she kept her stall for selling fishing-tackle by the bridge of Notre Dame. For a child seven years old, half dead with hunger and cold, it is a long way from the Rue de la Mortellerie to Montfaucon."

"But the exercise has made you grow as straight as a lamp-post, my girl, so you must not complain of that," said the Slasher, striking a match to light his pipe.

"Well," said Goualeuse, "I used to return very, very tired; then about noon Screech-Owl would give me a little piece of dry bread."

"There, again, short commons has made you as slender as a wasp, my girl; so you must not find fault with that either," said the Slasher, taking some hasty whiffs at his pipe. "But what ails you, comrade?—I mean to say, Master Rudolph? you look all-over-ish. Is it because this girl has seen hard times? Oh, we all know what it is to get a rub down."

"Oh! it is impossible you could ever have been as wretched as I was, Slasher?" said Fleur-de-Marie.

"What! not I, Goualeuse? Why, my girl, you were a queen compared to me! At least, when you were little, you had straw to sleep on and bread to eat; for my part, I used to spend my most comfortable nights in the Clichy-kilns, like a gipsy tramp, and fed upon cabbage-stumps and such-like dainties, which I picked up when and where I could; but as I was often too tired, after my day's dance, to go so far as the Clichy-kilns, I slept under the dark arches of the Louvre, and had beautiful white sheets—whenever the snow fell!"

"Oh! a man is hardy; but I was a poor little girl," said Fleur-de-Marie. "Yet for all that, I was as plump as a robin."

"Do you remember that?"

"Oh, I remember well! When Screech-Owl beat me, the first blow always knocked me down; then she stamped upon me, muttering, Oh, the nasty little beast! she hasn't a farthing's-worth of strength; she can't even bear a couple of thumps without falling! She called me the Nimming Kid: I never had any other appellation; that was my baptismal name."

"Just like me; I had the same baptism they give to stray dogs. I was called 'little hound!' 'pup,' or the 'Albino.' It was astonishing how much we are like one another, my girl," said the Slasher.

"That is true, in our misery," said Fleur-de-Marie, addressing the ruffian; for in spite of herself she almost always felt a sort of shame before Rudolph, scarcely venturing to lift up her eyes, although he seemed to belong to the class with whom she had usually lived.

"And when you had fetched the worms for your Owl, what did you do next?" asked the Slasher.

"Then the hag would send me to beg round where she kept her stall till night; for in the evening she went to the Pont Neuf, to sell fried fish. Heavens! I used to think it a long time to wait for a morsel of bread; but if I was unlucky enough to ask for something to eat, Screech-Owl would beat me and say, 'Get sixpence, and you shall have your supper, kid. Oh, me! then, being hungry, and sore from the thumps and kicks she gave me, I cried as if my heart would break; but the old woman hung my tray of barley-sugar about my neck, and placed me on the Pont Neuf, where in winter my teeth chattered with cold. Yet sometimes, in spite of myself, I slept as I stood, but not long, for Screech-Owl kicked me till I awoke. Then I remained on the bridge till eleven o'clock, my tray of barley-sugar hanging round my neck, and often crying bitterly. On seeing me cry, the passengers would sometimes give me a trifle, and I often obtained eight or ten pence, which I gave to my mistress, who searched me all over, and even examined my mouth, to see if I had concealed anything."

"Faith, tenpence was a taking round the hat for a little-un like you."

"It was; and the one-eyed woman, seeing—"

"With one eye?" said the Slasher, laughing.

"To be sure, for she had but one. Well, when she discovered the secret of my success, she always beat me severely before she took me to my post on the bridge, in order that I might cry and sob as people passed by, and by that means get more money."

"That was brutal, but deuced sharp of the old gal."

"It was, indeed. At last I got hardened to blows. I saw that Screech-Owl was very angry when I did not cry, so to be revenged upon her, the more she ill-used me the more I laughed, though the pain brought the tears into my eyes."

"But did not the barley-sugar tempt you, my poor Goualeuse?"

"Oh, Slasher, that it did; but I never tasted it, although I longed to do so. Alas! that longing was my ruin. One day, returning from Montfaucon, some boys beat me, and took away my basket. I returned home, well knowing what was in store for me; I had a merciless thumping, and no bread. In the evening, before she took me to the bridge, Screech-Owl, furious because I had brought nothing home the evening before, instead of beating me as usual to make me cry, tortured me by pulling the hair from the side of my temples—a part most sensible to pain."

"Thunderation! that was coming it too strong!" shouted the ruffian, banging the table fiercely with his fist, and knitting his brows.

"Beat a kid, that's nateral enough; but torture her—blood and thunder!"

Rudolph had listened attentively to the narrative of Fleur-de-Marie; he now looked with astonishment at the Slasher, whose outburst of feeling astonished him.

"What is the matter with you, old son?" he inquired.

"What is the matter with me? Have you no feeling? That beast of a Screech-Owl who tortured this child! Is your heart as hard as your knuckles?"

"Go on, my girl," said Rudolph, without noticing Slasher's interruption.

"I have told you how the hag beat me to

make me cry. I was then sent to the bridge with my barley-sugar. The old woman was at her frying-pan, and from time to time she shook her fist at me. However, as I had not broken my fast since the night before, and was very hungry, at the risk of putting her in a passion, I took a stick of barley-sugar, and began to eat it."

"That's the style, my girl."

"I ate a second piece—"

"Go it!"

"I found it very nice, not so much from daintiness as from real hunger. But an orange-girl cried out to the one-eyed woman, 'Holloa! Owley, the kid's eating your stock-in-trade!'"

"Oh, thunder and lightning! what a flare up!" said the Slasher, uncommonly interested. "Poor little mouse, what a fright you must have been in when she saw you!"

"How did you get out of the scrape, poor Goualeuse?" asked Rudolph, with as much interest as the other.

"Oh! it was a serious matter for me; but that was afterwards; for the old woman, although boiling over with rage at seeing me devour the barley-sugar, could not leave her frying-pan, for the fat was boiling."

"Ha, ha, ha! Very true—that was a regular fix for the old gal," shouted the Slasher, roaring with laughter.

"At a distance she threatened me with her long iron fork. When her fry was cooked she came up to me. I had only received a couple of ha'pence in charity, and I had eaten full three-pennorth of barley-sugar. She did not say a word, but took me by the hand, and pulled me away after her. At this moment I know not how it was that I did not drop dead with fright. I remember it as well as if it were but now; it was about New-year's Day, and there were many shops on the Pont Neuf, all filled with toys, and I had been looking at them all the evening with the greatest delight—beautiful dolls, little furnished houses: you know how amusing such things are to a child."

"And had you never any playthings, Goualeuse?" asked the Slasher.

"Me? Good heavens! who was there to give me any playthings?" said the girl, in a sad tone.

"However, the evening passed away. Although it was in the depth of winter, I only had on a short cotton gown—no stockings, no shift, and wooden shoes on my feet: that was not enough to stifle one with heat, was it? Well, when the one-eyed woman took me by the hand, I became bathed in perspiration from head to foot. What frightened me most was, that, instead of swearing as usual, she only kept on muttering between her teeth. She never once let go my hand, but made me walk so fast—so very fast—that I was obliged to run to keep up with her, and in running I lost one of my wooden shoes; and, as I did not dare to say so, I followed her with one foot naked on the bare stones, and when we reached home it was streaming with blood!"

"The old one-eyed cat," said the Slasher, again striking the table in his rage. "It makes me shudder to think of the poor child trotting along beside the old thief, with her poor little foot all bloody."

"We lodged in a garret in the Rue de la Mortellerie; adjoining the entrance to our alley there was a public. The Screech-Owl went in, still dragging me by the hand, and drank a half-pint of brandy at the bar."

"Thunder! Why, I could not drink that without puffing out as round as an apple."

"It was the old woman's regular allowance; perhaps that was the reason she beat me so much. At length we got up into our loft; Screech-Owl double-locked the door. I threw myself at her feet, and begged her pardon for having eaten the barley-sugar. She did not answer me, and I heard her mumbling to herself as she walked about the room, 'What shall I do to-night to this greedy kid—this little thief of barley-sugar? Let me see—how shall I serve her out?' Then she stopped to look at me maliciously with her one green eye, while I still knelt before her. Then suddenly the old woman went to a shelf and took down a pair of pincers."

"Pincers!" exclaimed the Slasher.

"Yes, pincers."

"What for?"

"To strike you?" asked Rudolph.

"To nip you?" inquired the Slasher.

"Oh, no," answered the poor girl, trembling at the very remembrance.

"To pluck out your hair?"

"No; to pull out one of my teeth."

On hearing this, the Slasher uttered such a ripping oath, accompanied by such furious imprecations, that all the guests turned round with astonishment.

"Why, what's the matter now?" asked Rudolph.

"What's the matter? Why, I'll flay her alive if I can catch her. The one-eyed old trot! Where is she?—Tell me where is she? I'll rout her out and dance the werry liver out of—"

"And did she really take out your tooth, my poor girl?" asked Rudolph, whilst the Slasher vented his rage in a volley of epithets.

"Yes, sir; but not at the first pull! Great heaven—how I suffered! She held my head between her knees, as if it had been in a vice. Then, partly with the pincers, and partly with her fingers, she pulled out my tooth, and then said—'Now, my beauty! I will pull out one of your teeth every day; and when you have no more left I will throw you into the river, to be eaten by the fishes.'"

"Of all the devils! to wrench out a poor child's teeth in that manner!" exclaimed the Slasher with redoubled fury.

"And how did you escape from the Owl?" inquired Rudolph.

"The following day, instead of going to

Montfaucon, I went on the side of the Champs Elysées, so afraid was I of being drowned by the hag! I would have gone to the end of the world rather than have fallen into her clutches again. After rambling for some time, I fairly lost myself; I had not met any one of whom I could beg, and, indeed, I was so frightened I did not think of it. At night I hid myself in a timber-yard, under some piles of wood. As I was very little, I was able to creep under an old door, and hide myself amongst a heap of logs. I was so hungry that I tried to gnaw a bit of the bark, but I could not bite it—it was too hard. At length I fell asleep. In the morning, hearing a noise, I crept still further under the wood-pile. It was tolerably warm, and if I had had something to eat I could not have been more comfortable, considering it was winter-time."

"Just like me in the plaster kilns."

"I did not dare to quit the wood-yard, for I fancied that Screech-Owl would hunt for me everywhere, to pull out my teeth and drown me, and would be sure to catch me if I stirred from my lurking-place."

"Hold! do not speak of that old monster again—it makes the blood come into my eyes! The truth is, that you have known the worst kind of hardship. Poor little pigeon! be assured that I am very sorry that I frightened you so just now, when I threatened to beat you. I did not mean it, I'm ready to swear!"

"Why should you not have beaten me? I have no one to protect me."

"That's the very reason, because you are not like the others—because you have no bully to take your part, that I would not have beaten you. When I say no one, I do not mean our mate Rudolph; but his coming was a piece of luck, and he certainly did give me my allowance when he did come."

"Go on, my child," said Rudolph. "How did you get away from the timber-yard?"

"Next day, about noon, while under the pile of wood, I heard a great dog barking. I listened. The bark came nearer and nearer; then a deep, hoarse voice exclaimed, 'My dog barks — somebody is hid in the yard!' 'Thieves!' said another voice. The two men began to encourage the dog, and cry, 'Seize 'em! shake 'em there!' The dog ran towards me, and for fear of being bitten, I began to cry out with all my might. 'Hark!' said a voice: 'I hear a child!' They called the dog off; I came out from the wood-pile, and saw a gentleman and a man in a smock-frock. 'What do you do in my yard, you little thief?' said the gentleman, in a menacing tone. I clasped my hands and said, 'Pray don't hurt me: I have had nothing to eat for two days, and I've run away from the Screech-Owl, who pulled out my tooth, and said she would throw me to the fishes. Having nowhere to lay my head, I crept through the fence; I slept during the night among these logs, under this heap, not thinking to hurt anybody.' 'I'm not to be cheated that way! You came here to steal wood. Go and call the police,' said the timber-merchant to his man."

"Oh, the old fool! the old Timberknot himself! Call the guard! Why didn't he send for a park of artillery at once?" said the Slasher. "Hook his wood, indeed, and you only eight years old! What an old ass!"

"That is true; for his man replied: 'Steal your logs, master! How can she do that? She is not so big as the short-cuts!' 'Very likely,' said the timber-merchant; 'but if she does not come to thieve on her own account, she does for others. Thieves have a parcel of children like this, whom they send to pry about and hide themselves, and open the doors of houses to them. She must be taken before the magistrate. Take care she does not escape.'"

"Upon my honour, this sawdust-man was a greater block than any log in his yard," said the Slasher.

"I was taken to the magistrate," resumed La Goualeuse. "I accused myself of being a vagrant; they sent me to prison; I was taken before the court, and formally sentenced as a rogue and vagabond, to remain until I was sixteen years of age in a reformatory. I heartily thank the judges for their kindness; for in prison I had food, I was not beaten, and it was a perfect paradise compared to the Screech-Owl's miserable roost. Moreover, in prison I learned to sew; but, alas! I was idle: I preferred singing to working, and particularly when the sun was shining. Oh! when it shone brightly in the court-yard of the prison I could not refrain from singing; and then, while I sang, I fancied I was no longer a prisoner. It was after I began to sing so much that they called me Sweet-throat instead of Nimming Kid. When I was sixteen I left the prison. At the door I found the Ogress of this house, with two or three old women, who had come to see some of my fellow-prisoners, and who had always told me that when I left the prison they would find me some employment."

"Oh, lovely! I understand," said the Slasher.

"'My pretty little maid,' said the Ogress and the old women, 'will you come and lodge with us: we will give you nice clothes, and you shall have nothing to do but amuse yourself.' But I distrusted them and refused, saying to myself, I know how to use my needle well, and I have two hundred francs by me. I have been eight years in prison, I should like to enjoy myself a little—that will not harm anybody: work will come when the money is gone.' And so I began to spend my eight pounds. Oh! that was a sad mistake," added Fleur-de-Marie, with a sigh. "I ought first to have got work: but I hadn't a soul on earth to advise me. A girl of sixteen—thrown as I was on the streets of Paris, is so lonely. But what is done is done. I have acted wrong, and I have suffered for it. I began, then, to flourish with my money; first,

I bought flowers to put in my room—I do *so* love flowers! then I bought a gown, a pretty shawl, and took a walk in the Bois de Boulogne, and went to St. Germains, to Vincennes, away out in the country. Oh, how I love the country!"

"With a sweetheart, my girl?" asked the Slasher.

"Oh, my gracious! no. I like to be my own mistress. I took my little excursions with one of my prison companions—a very good little girl: they called her Dimpleton, because she was always laughing."

"Dimpleton! I don't know her," said the Slasher, who appeared to be taxing his memory.

"I didn't think you knew her. I am sure she conducted herself very properly in prison; and, if she was the merriest girl, she was also the most industrious; she took out with her when she left the prison at least four hundred francs which she had earned. And then she is so tidy!—you should see her! When I say I had no one to advise me, I am wrong: I ought to have listened to her: for, after having a week's holiday together, she said to me, 'Now we have had our holiday, we ought to seek work, and not waste our money.' I, who was so happy to ramble in the fields and woods—it was just at the close of spring, this year—I answered: 'Oh, I will make holiday a little longer, and by-and-bye I will work.' Since that time I have not seen Dimpleton, but I heard a few days since that she was living in the Temple district; that she was a famous needlewoman, and earned as much as twenty-five sous a day, and has a small workroom of her own: but now for the world I dare not see her again—I feel as if I should die with shame if I met her."

"So, my poor girl," said Rudolph, "you spent all your money in country jaunts—you must love the country."

"Indeed, indeed, I do! What would I not give to live there! Now, Dimpleton, on the contrary, prefers Paris, and promenading the Boulevards; but she was so kind and so obliging—she went into the country only to please me."

"And you did not even leave yourself a few sous to live upon whilst you sought work?" asked the Slasher.

"Yes, I had reserved about fifty francs; but it happened that I had for my laundress a woman named Lorraine, a poor creature, with none but a kind Providence to protect her. She was then very near her confinement, and yet was obliged all day long to be with her hands and feet in the washing-tub. She was taken ill, and, not being able to work, applied for admittance to a lying-in hospital; there was no vacancy, and she could earn nothing. The time of her trouble was near at hand, and she had not a penny to pay for the bed in a miserable garret from which they drove her. Fortunately, one day, at the end of the Pont Notre Dame, she met with Goubin's wife, who had been hiding for four days in the cellar of a house which was being pulled down behind the Hospital."

"But why did Goubin's wife hide herself in the daytime?"

"To escape from her husband, who threatened to kill her. She only went out at night to buy some bread: it was then that she met with poor Lorraine, ill, and hardly able to drag herself along, for she was expecting to be confined every hour. Seeing this, Goubin's wife took her to the cellar where she was hiding. It was a shelter—no more. There she shared her bread and straw with poor Lorraine, who gave birth, in that cellar, to a poor little infant, her only covering and bed being a little straw! Well, it seems that Goubin's wife could not bear it, and so, running all risks, even of being killed by her husband, who was looking for her everywhere, she left the cellar in the daytime, and came to seek me. She knew I had still a little money left, and that I could assist her if I felt disposed: so, when Elmina had told me all about poor Lorraine, who was obliged to lie with her new-born babe on straw, I told her to bring them both to my room directly, and I would take a chamber for her next to mine. So I did; oh! how happy she was, poor Lorraine! when she found herself in a bed, with her babe by her side in a little wicker-cradle which I had bought for her. Elmina and I nursed her till she was strong enough to get about again, and then the rest of my money enabled her to return to her washing."

"And when you had spent all your money on Lorraine and her little one, what did you do, my child?" inquired Rudolph.

"Then I looked out for work, but it was too late. I was a good needlewoman. I had much courage, and thought that I had only to wish for work and that I should get it. Oh, how I deceived myself! I went into a shop where they sell ready-made linen, and asked for work, and, as I would not tell a story, I said I had been once in prison, on which they showed me the door, without making me any answer. I begged they would give me a trial, but they pushed me into the street as if I had been a thief. Then I remembered, when too late, what Dimpleton had told me. I sold my small remnant of clothes and linen to obtain food, and at length, when I had nothing left, they drove me from my lodging. I had not eaten for two days; I did not know where to sleep. Then it was I met the Ogress and one of the old women. Knowing where I lodged, they had been continually on the look-out for me from the time I came out of prison. They told me they would get me work—I believed them. They led me with them; I was so exhausted for want of food that I hardly knew what I did. They gave me brandy to drink, and—and—behold!——" said the wretched creature, burying her face in her hands.

"Is it long since you became a boarder with the Ogress, my poor girl?" asked Rudolph, in accents of compassion.

"Six weeks, sir," replied the Sweet-throat, shuddering.

"I understand," said the Slasher; "I know you as well now as if I were your father and mother, and you had never been off my knee. Well, this is a confession and a half—rayther!"

"Telling the story of your life makes you sad, my child," said Rudolph.

"Alas! sir," replied Fleur-de-Marie, sorrowfully, "since my birth, this is the first time that I have recalled all these things at once to my memory, and my tale is not a cheerful one."

"You're hard to suit!" said the Slasher, ironically. "Perhaps you regret that you are not kitchen-wench in some cook-shop, or servant to some old brutes to look after their kids."

"Oh!" said Fleur-de-Marie, with a deep-drawn sigh, "to be quite happy we must be quite virtuous."

"What a notion! Your nut's screwed on wrong," exclaimed the Slasher, with a loud burst of laughter. "Why not strike in for a prize at once for honouring your father and mother, whom you never knew?"

"When an infant my parents left me in the street, as people do a worthless puppy; perhaps they had not enough to feed themselves," said Goualeuse, with bitterness. "I want nothing of them; I complain of nothing; but there are lots happier than mine."

"The mischief there are! What under the sun can you want more? You are blooming as a Wenus; are only sixteen and a half; you sing like a ker-nary; look like a wirgin; are called Fleur-de-Marie, and yet you complain! What will you say when you have a stove under your trotters, and a grizzled shock of hair like the Ogress yonder?"

"Oh! I shall never live to be her age."

"Oh! I didn't know you had a patent for never growing older."

"No; but I could not lead such a life. I have already *the* bad cough."

"Go it! I can almost fancy I see you already in the cold-meat box. Of all the sillies I ever seed!"

"Have you often such thoughts as these, Goualeuse?" asked Rudolph.

"Sometimes. Listen, M. Rudolph; perhaps *you* will understand me. In the morning, when I go to buy milk from the milk-woman at the corner of the Rue de la Vieille-Draperie, with the coppers which the Ogress gives me, and see her go away in her little donkey-cart, I often envy her, and I say to myself, 'She is going into the country, to the pure air, to her home, to her family;' and then I return alone and wretched into the loft of the Ogress, where you cannot see clearly even at noonday."

"Never mind, child, be good, keep a stiff upper lip; give the shop-boys the wink that wakens up, and be honest," said the Slasher.

"Honest! good heaven! how am I to be honest? The clothes I stand in belong to the Ogress; I owe her for my board and lodging; I can't stir from her; she would have me taken up as a thief. I belong to her—I must pay her with myself."

"The poor girl could not help shuddering as she uttered these last horrible words, while a tear trembled on her long eye-lashes.

"Well, then, remain as you are, and give up comparing yourself to a country turnip," said the Slasher. "Are you taking a cheap excursion out of your head? Only think, you may still cut a figure in the capital, whilst the milk-woman must boil the pot for her brats, milk her cows, cut grass for her rabbits, and, perhaps, after all, get knocked down by her husband when he comes home from the Horse-path Inn. A flattering fate that, and something to boast of, indeed!"

Goualeuse did not venture a reply; her eye was fixed, her heart was full, and her face wore an expression of painful distress. Rudolph had listened with deep interest to this recital, made with such touching frankness. Misery, destitution, ignorance of the world, had destroyed this wretched girl, cast, at sixteen years of age, alone and unprotected, on the immensity of Paris.

Rudolph involuntarily thought of a beloved child whom he had lost—a girl, who died at the age of six years; who, had she lived, would have been, like Fleur-de-Marie, sixteen years and a half old. This recollection painfully excited his solicitude for the unhappy creature whose depressing story he had just heard.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SLASHER'S PATTER.

THE reader will not have forgotten that two guests of the tap were closely watched by a third individual who had recently entered the room. We have said that one of these men, who had on a Greek cap, and carefully concealed his left hand, had anxiously asked the Ogress whether the Schoolmaster and the Big Cripple had yet been there.

During the story of the Goualeuse, which they could not overhear, these two men had been talking in a very low tone, throwing occasional anxious glances at the door. He who wore the Greek cap said to his comrade, "The Big Cripple don't turn up, nor the Schoolmaster."

"Perhaps the Skeleton has settled him, and cut with the swag."

"That would be a pretty letting-us-into-a-hole, who put up the whole job, and expect our regulars," replied the other.

The new comer, who observed the two men, was seated too far off to hear their conversa-

tion; but, after having cautiously consulted a small paper concealed inside his cap, he appeared satisfied with his examination, rose from the table, and said to the Ogress, who was sleeping at the counter, with her feet on the stove, and her great cat on her knees, "I say, Mother Ponisse, look in before your cat winks; give an eye to my pitcher and my plate: I don't want anyone to make free with them."

"Make yourself easy, my lad," said Mother Ponisse; "if your plate and pitcher are empty no one will meddle with them."

The new comer laughed heartily at the joke, and then slipped out, his departure being unnoticed.

The moment this man retired, before the door could be closed, Rudolph caught a glimpse of the charcoal-man, whose black face and tall figure we have already alluded to, and he had just time to manifest to him, by an impatient gesture, how much he disliked his watchful attendance; but the charcoal-man did not seem to heed Rudolph's uneasiness the least, for he still loitered about the tavern door.

The countenance of Goualeuse became still more saddened; with her back to the wall, her head drooping on her bosom, her full blue eyes gazing mechanically about her, the unfortunate being seemed bowed with a heavy weight of painful thoughts. Two or three times, having met Rudolph's fixed look, she turned away, unable to account to herself for the singular impression which the Unknown had made upon her. Weighed down and abashed at his presence, she almost regretted having given him so faithful an account of her unhappy life. The Slasher, on the contrary, was in high feathers; he had devoured the whole bag of mystery without the least assistance; the wine and brandy had made him very communicative; the humiliation of having found his *master*, as he called him, had been forgotten in the generous conduct of Rudolph; and he further felt conscious of such decided physical superiority, that his mortification had given way to a sentiment of admiration, mingled with fear and respect. This absence of ill-feeling, and the savage pride with which he boasted of never having stolen, proved that the Slasher was not a hardened villain. This had not escaped Rudolph's penetration, and he awaited the man's recital with curiosity.

"Now, my boy," said he, "we are listening to you."

The Slasher up-seesed down his glass, and then began:—

"You, my poor Goualeuse, were at last picked up by Screech-Owl! may the devil fly away with her! You never had a shelter until the moment when you were imprisoned as a vagrant. I can never recollect having slept in what is called a bed before I was nineteen years of age—a happy age!—when I became a trooper."

"You have served, then, Slasher?" observed Rudolph.

"Three years; but you'll hear all about it; the dark arches of the Louvre, plaster-kilns of Clichy, and the quarries of Montrouge; those were the mansions of my youth. Thus, you see, I had my town residence and my country-house, and quite enough and to spare."

"What was your trade?"

"By my faith, master, I have a dim recollection of having strolled about in my childhood with an old rag and bone picker, who almost knocked the life out of me; and it must be true, for I have never since met one of those old Cupids with a wicker-work quiver without a desire to warm his carcase—a proof that one of them must have whacked me when I was a child. My first employment was to help the knackers cut horses' throats at Montfaucon. I was about ten or twelve. When first I began to slash these poor old beasts it had quite an effect on me. At the end of a month I thought no more about it; on the contrary, I began to like my trade. No one had his knife so well sharpened and keen-pointed as mine, and that made me rejoice in using it. When I had cut the animals' throats, they gave me for my trouble a piece of the thigh of some animal that had died of disease, for those they slaughter are sold to the ham and beef shops near the School of Medicine, where it is converted into beef, mutton, veal, or game, according to the taste of the purchasers. Oh! when I got my chunk of horse-flesh I would not call the king my master; I went with it to the kiln like a wolf to his den, and then, with the leave of the plaster-burners, I made a splendid broil on the ashes. Gridiron clubs nowhere! When the lime-burners were not at work, I picked up dry wood at Romainville, struck a light, and broiled my steak under the walls of the bone-house. Holy mother! Those were the times! Cooked in this fashion the meat certainly was bloody, and almost raw, but that made a change."

"And your name? what did they call you?" asked Rudolph.

"My hair was then more flaxen than now, and my eyes were always bloodshot, and so they called me the *Albino*. Albinos are the white rabbits among men, and they have red eyes," added the Slasher, in a grave tone, as if delivering himself of a physiological axiom.

"And your parents? your family?"

"My parents? Oh, they lodged at the same number as those of Goualeuse. My birthplace?—why the first corner of no-matter-what street, either on the right or left-hand side of the way, going up or coming down the kennel."

"So you cursed your father and mother for having deserted you."

"Why that would not have set my leg if I had broken it. Anyhow—though it's true

they played me a scurvy trick in bringing me into the world; but I should not have complained if I'd been blessed as beggars ought to be made—I mean for to say, tough to cold, hunger, or thirst, which would make it all the easier for beggars to be honest."

"You have been hungry, and have suffered from cold, and yet have not stolen?"

"No; and I have had van-loads of misery, too. It's a fact, that I have often had dark-cell diet for two days at a time; that was more than my share. Well, for all that, I never stole."

"For fear of the prison?"

"For fear of the prison! Well, I am—Oh, ha, ha!" said the Slasher, shrugging his shoulders, and indulging in a loud laugh. "I should not have stolen bread, for fear of getting my *allowance*, eh? As an honest man I starved; as a thief they would have fed me in a prison; aye, and well too! But I did not steal, because—because—why, because boning is fit only for sneaks—so that's all about it!"

This reply, noble as it was in itself, but of the value of which the speaker himself had no idea, perfectly astonished Rudolph. He felt that the poor fellow who had remained honest under the most cruel privations was to be doubly respected, since the punishment of crime would have been to him a sure resource. Rudolph held out his hand to this ill-used savage of civilization, whom misery had been unable wholly to corrupt. The Slasher stared at his entertainer with astonishment—almost with respect; he hardly dared to touch the hand thus proffered to him. He felt impressed with some vague idea that there was a great gulf between Rudolph and himself.

"Good!" said Rudolph to him, "you have heart and honour."

"Heart! honour! I? Stash that! now you're *chaffing* me," he replied, with surprise.

"To suffer misery and hunger rather than steal, is to have heart and honour," said Rudolph, gravely.

"Well, may be so," said the Slasher, as if thinking—"may be so."

"Does that surprise you?"

"Strikes me all in a heap; for people don't usually say such things to me; they generally treat me as they would a mangy yelper. It is strange, though, the effect what you say has on me. Heart! honour!" he repeated, with an air of thoughtfulness.

"Well, what ails you?"

"Faith, I can't get it out," replied the Slasher, in a tone of emotion; "but these words quite flutter my pulse; and I feel more flattered than if anyone told me I was a bigger rough than either the Skeleton or the Schoolmaster. I never felt anything like it. Upon my soul, though, these words, and the fisticuffs at the wind-up of our set-to—you did lay 'em on like a good 'un—without alluding to your paying for supper, and the words you have chosen to say—in half a crack," he exclaimed bluntly, as if he could not find language to express his thoughts, "make sure that, in life or death, you may bet your boots that the Slasher's linked with you!"

Rudolph, unwilling to betray his emotion, replied in a tone as collected as he could assume, "Did you remain long as a knacker's helper?"

"I believe you! First I was quite sick of cutting up old worn-out horses, who could not even kick; but when I was about sixteen, and my voice began to break, it became a passion, a taste, a thirst, a rage with me to cut and slash. I did not care for eating and drinking; that was my only delight; you only ought to 'a' seen me in the heat of my work! Except an old pair of woollen trousers, I was quite naked. When, with my large, sharp knife in my hand, I had about me fifteen or twenty nags waiting their turn—thunder! when I began to slaughter them, I don't know what possessed me—I was like a fury. My ears had a singing in them, and I saw everything red—all was red; and I slashed—and—slashed and slashed, until my knife fell from my hands! I was all there! What happiness! Had I been rich as a pawnbroker, I could have paid them to have revelled in my trade."

"That's what gave you the habit of stabbing," said Rudolph.

"Most likely; but when I was turned sixteen, the passion became so strong that, when I once began slashing, I became mad, I spoiled my work. Yes, I spoiled the hides; for I slashed, and cut them across and across; indeed, I was so 'b——y' quick that I did not see what I was about. At length they turned me out of the slaughter-house. I sought employment with the butchers, for I always liked that sort of business; but they came the grand; they looked down on me with the same contempt with which a boot-maker looks upon a cobbler. So I had to seek employment elsewhere, and I didn't find it very readily—that was the time when I so often went to bed hungry. At last I got work in the quarries at Montrouge, but at the end of a couple of years I grew tired of going round and round, like a squirrel in his cage, and dragging stone for tenpence a day. I was tall and strong, so I enlisted in a regiment. They asked my name, age, and papers. Name?—the Albino. Age?—look at my beard. Papers?—here's the discharge of my master, the quarryman. As I was well cut out for a grenadier, they palmed me with the shilling."

"With your strength, courage, and passion for stabbing and slashing, you ought, if it had been war time, to have risen to officership."

"Thunder! What's that you say?—what, slash the English or the Prussians! Why, that would have been more to my taste than cutting up old horses; but, worse luck, there was no war and too much discipline. If an apprentice tries to punch his master's head,

if he be the weaker, why, he gets the worst of it; if he be the stronger, he has the best; he is turned out of doors, perhaps sent to prison—and there's an end on't. In the army it's a grey goose of quite another colour. One day our sergeant bullied a good deal, to make me more attentive—he was right, for I was a bit of a skulk. That enraged me, and I kicked at it: he shoved me; I pushed him again; he collared me, and I let him have one between the eyes. Some of the men fell upon me; I was wild with passion, and the blood was up in my eyes in a moment. I had my knife in my hand—for it took place in the kitchen, where I was on cooking-fatigue—and at it I went. I cut, slashed—slashed, chopped, as if I had been in the slaughter-house. I laid open the sergeant, wounded two soldiers—it was a regular butchery; I gave eleven wounds among three of them—yes, eleven. Blood flowed everywhere; blood, as though we were in the slaughter-house—I bathed in it——"

The speaker lowered his head with a sombre, sullen air, and was silent.

"What are you thinking of?" asked Rudolph, with interest.

"Nothing—nothing," he replied, hastily; then, with an air of brutal carelessness, he added: "At last they overpowered me; I was tried by the drumhead-beaks, who dispensed a dozen lead-pills as my dose."

"You escaped, then?"

"No; but I had fifteen stretch at the hulks, instead of being guillotined. I forgot to tell you that, while in the regiment, I had saved two of my comrades from drowning in the Marne, when we were in garrison at Melun. Another time—you will laugh, and say I am safe from fire or water, when saving men or women; at another time, in garrison at Rouen, all the wooden houses, blasted old rookeries, in one quarter, were on fire, and burning like matches. I was one of the fire-guard. We hastened to the fire; the people called out to me that there was an old woman who could not escape from her room, which was already in flames. I made my way to it. Lord! how it did burn; it reminded me of the kilns in my happier days. In a word, I saved the old woman, although I had the very soles of my feet scorched. Thanks to my having done these things, and the simmy (soft sawder) of my counsel, my sentence was trimmed, and, instead of being guillotined, I was sent to the hulks for fifteen years. When I found that my life would be spared, and that I was to go to the galleys, I would have sprung upon my palavering advocate, and twisted his neck at the moment when he came to wish me joy, and tell me he had saved my life—confound him!—only they prevented me."

"Sorry that your punishment was altered?"

"Yes; for those who sport the knife, the knife is the proper fate; for those who steal, the cuffs on their paws—to each his fit. But to force you to live amongst galley-slaves, when you are entitled to be guillotined off-hand, is shameful; besides, my life, when I first went to the hulks, was rather queer: one doesn't kill a man and forget it easily, let me tell you."

"You felt remorse, then?"

"Remorse! Oh, no; for I have served my time," said the savage; "but at first a night did not pass but I saw—like a nightmare—the serjeant and soldiers whom I slashed and slaughtered; that is, they were not alone," added the cut-throat, with a horrid shudder; "they were in tens, and dozens, and hundreds, and thousands, each waiting his turn, in a kind of slaughter-house, just as the horses whose throats I used to cut at Montfaucon waited, each for his turn. Then, I saw *red*, and began to cut and slash away on these men as I used formerly to do on the horses. But the more I hacked down the soldiers, the faster did others present themselves; and as they turned their eyes in, they looked at me with an air so kind, so gentle, that I cursed myself for killing them; but I couldn't prevent myself from doing it. That was not all! I never had a brother; and yet it seemed as if every one of those whom I had killed was my brother, and that I had a bit of my heart in every one of them. At last, when I could bear it no longer, I used to wake, covered with sweat, as cold as melting snow."

"That was a horrid dream, Slasher!"

"Oh, burn it, yes? That dream was enough to drive me mad or foolish; so twice I tried to kill myself; once by swallowing verdigris, and another time by trying to strangle myself with my chain; but no use a-trying! —I am as strong as a young bull. The verdigris only made me thirsty, and as for the twist of the chain round my neck—why, that merely gave me a natural blue cravat; afterwards, the desire for life returned to me, my nightmare ceased to torment me, and I tramped in the same dust as the rest of the job-lot."

"At the hulks you were in a good school for learning to thieve?"

"Yes, but I'd no taste for it. The other grey-backs chaffed me about that a little; but I shut their jaws precious soon with a few hits of my chain. It was in this way I first come across the Schoolmaster, and I must give him the credit due to his science—he settled with me as you did some little time ago."

"So, he's been paired-off with his mate in his time?"

"He was sentenced for life, but made his escape."

"Made his escape, and not denounced?"

"It is not for me to blow on him: it would look as if I was afraid of him."

"But how is it that he is not detected by the police? Have they not got his description?"

"His photo? Oh, to be sure, yes; but he has long since got rid of the marks that Nature put upon his phiz, and now, none but

Soul-baker himself could twig the Schoolmaster."

"How did he come that?"

"He begun by shortening his nose, which was a yard long; he did that by eating it away with vitriol."

"Go away—none of your stretchers!"

"If he comes in this evening, you'll see. He had a nose like a parrot, and now it is like Death's head; his lips, besides, are as thick as your fist, and his face is as full of seams as a bone-grubber's coat."

"Then he is not recognizable?"

"It's half a year since he made his lucky escape from Rochefort, and the cops have met him a hundred times without nailing him."

"What was he sent up for?"

"For forgery, theft, and murder. He is called the Schoolmaster, because he writes a fine hand, and knows all sorts of book-words."

"And he is much dreaded?"

"He won't be when you give him such a thrashing as you gave me. Whew! how I long to see it!"

"What's his pertickler lay?"

"He is linked with a hag as bad as himself, and deep as Old Nick; but she never shows, though he has told the Ogress that some day or other he would bring his mott (woman) along with him."

"And this woman assists him in his robberies?"

"Yes, and his murders too. They say he brags of having already, with her help, laid out stiff-uns of two or three people; and, amongst others, three weeks ago, a cattle-dealer on the road to Poissy, whom they also cleaned out."

"He will be nabbed sooner or later."

"It will take both cunning and strength to do that, for he always has under his blouse a brace of loaded pistols and a dagger. He says that 'Jack Ketch' waits for him, that he can only lose his head once, and will kill all he can kill to clear the road for bolting. Oh! he makes no secret of it, and as he is twice as strong as you and me, they will have a rummy old job who take him."

"And when you left the hulks what did you do, Slasher?"

"Offered myself to a master lighterman, of St. Paul's Quay, where I now get my living."

"But as you have never been a prig, why do you live in the City?"

"Where would you have me live? Who likes to be seen with a ticket-of-leaver, even? I should be tired of always being alone, for I like company, and here I am with my equals. I kick up a dust sometimes, and they fear me as they do fire in the City: but the traps never come down on me, except now and then for a row, for which they give me, perhaps, two days on the mill, and there's an end of it."

"How much do you earn a-day?"

"Eighteenpence, for taking baths in the river up to my middle from twelve to fifteen hours a-day, summer and winter; but, let me be fair and square if, through having my toes in the water, I get chicken-flesh. I am allowed to break my arms in breaking up old vessels, and carrying timber on my back. I begin like a beast of burden, and end like the tail of a fish. When my strength fails me, I shall go in for a hook and a basket, like the old rag-picker whom I see in the visions of my childhood."

"With all this, you are not unhappy?"

"There are worse off than me; and if it wasn't for my dream of the sergeant and soldiers with their throats cut—for I have the dream still sometimes—I could quietly wait for the moment when I should drop down dead on some muck-heap, like that on which I was born; but the dream—thunder and lightning! I can't bear even to think of that," said the Slasher, knocking the ashes out of his pipe on a corner of the table.

Goualeuse had been an inattentive listener to the Slasher; she seemed absorbed in a painful reverie. Rudolph himself continued pensive.

A tragical incident was about to recall these three personages to a remembrance of the spot in which they were met.

CHAPTER V.

THE ARREST.

THE man who had gone out for a moment, after having desired the Ogress to give an eye to his jug and plate, shortly returned, accompanied by a broad-shouldered, powerful man, to whom he said, "Well, I'll be blowed if it wasn't rich to have run again you this 'ere way, old pal! Come in, and let us drink a glass of wine."

The Slasher, pointing to the new-comer, whispered to Rudolph and the Goualeuse, "There'll be a shindy presently; he's a grab; now mind your eye."

The two bandits, one of whom, he with the Greek cap pulled over his brows, had inquired several times for the Schoolmaster, exchanged a rapid glance, and, rising together from the table, made their way towards the door; but the plain-clothes constables, on a given signal, seized them. A terrible struggle ensued. The tavern door opened, and other policemen rushed into the room, whilst, outside, glittered the muskets of the gendarmes. Taking advantage of the tumult, the charcoal-seller, of whom we have spoken, advanced to the threshhold of the tapis-franc, and, by chance, catching the eye of Rudolph, he placed the fore-finger of his right hand on his lips. Rudolph, with a wave of the hand, as rapid as it was authoritative, desired him to go, and continued to watch the scene passing before him. The man with the Greek cap howled with rage, and half-extended on a table, struggled so

desperately, that three men could scarcely hold him. Spiritless, overcome, dejected, with livid face and white lips, his lower jaw drooping and shaking convulsively, his comrade made no resistance, but held out his hands to receive the handcuffs. The Ogress, accustomed to such scenes, sat at her bar without stirring, her hands in her apron pockets.

"What have these two fellows been up to, my dear M. Narcisse Borel?" asked she of one of the policemen, whom she knew.

"Murdered an old woman yesterday, in the Rue St. Christophe, to clear out her room. Before she died, the poor old creature said that she had bitten one of her murderers in the hand. We had our eyes on these two villains, and my comrade come just now to make sure of his men, and so we dropped in to take them."

"Luckily, they paid me in advance for their pint!" said the Ogress. "Will you take a glass of anything, M. Narcisse? A drop of Ratafia of the Column?"

"Thanks, Mother Ponisse, but I must take care of these scoundrels. Hang me, if one don't kick a little still."

The assassin in the Greek cap was furious with rage, and when they tried to get them into a hackney-coach, which was waiting in the street, he resisted so stoutly, that they were obliged to carry him. His accomplice, seized with a nervous tremor, could hardly support himself, and his livid lips trembled as though he were speaking. They threw him, helpless and unresisting, into the vehicle. Before he left the tap, the principal officer attentively scanned the assembled drinkers, and said to the Slasher, in a tone approaching to kindness, "What, are you here, you rascal? It's a long time since we heard anything of you. What, no more rows? Are you growing steady?"

"Steady as a brick! Why, you know that I never break a head now — except I am asked."

"You would not want more than that to provoke others, strong as you are."

"Yet here is my master," said the Slasher, laying his hand on Rudolph's shoulder.

"Hallo! a new recruit! I haven't got him on the books!" said the police officer, looking steadfastly at Rudolph.

"And I do not think we shall become acquainted," replied the latter.

"I hope not, for your sake, my boy," said the officer; then, turning to the Ogress, "Good night, Mother Ponisse; your tap is a regular mouse-trap: this is the third murderer I've nailed here."

"And I hope it won't be the last, M. Narcisse; my house is quite at your service," said the Ogress, with an insinuating nod, accompanied by one of her blandest smiles.

When the police had left, the young man with the haggard countenance, who was smoking, and drinking brandy, refilled his pipe, and said in a broken voice to the Slasher, "Didn't you twig the Greek cap? he belongs to Boulotte's gang. When I saw the traps walk in, I said to myself, 'There's something brewing;' not to remember how the other carefully hid his fives under the table."

"The Schoolmaster and the Big Cripple were lucky in not being here," said the Ogress. "Greeky asked for him twice, saying they had some work together; but I never break a leg (split) upon my customers. If they take 'em, well and good—every one for himself; but I never sell 'em. Talk of the wolf and his tail appears!" added the Ogress, as at the moment a man and woman entered the cabaret; "here they are—the Schoolmaster and his belsavage. Well, upon my word, he was right not to show her, for I never clapped my eyes on such an ugly mug in my life! She ought to be very much obliged to him for his taste."

At the name of the Schoolmaster, a sort of shudder seemed to circulate amongst the guests. Rudolph himself, in spite of his natural intrepidity, could not wholly subdue a slight emotion at the sight of this redoubtable ruffian, whom he contemplated for an instant with mixed feelings of curiosity and horror. The Slasher had spoken truly, when he said that the Schoolmaster was frightfully mutilated. The imagination cannot picture anything more horribly repugnant than the countenance of this man, furrowed in all directions with deep, livid cicatrices. The corrosive action of the vitriol had swelled his lips; the cartilages of his nose were split, and two misshapen holes supplied the place of nostrils. His grey eyes were very bright, small, circular, and sparkled with ferocity; his forehead, flat as a tiger's, was half hidden beneath a fur cap, with long yellow hair, looking like that of the monster's mane.

The Schoolmaster was not more than five feet two or three inches; his head, disportionately large, was buried between shoulders, broad, powerful, and fleshy, which displayed their muscle even under the loose folds of his coarse cotton blouse; he had long muscular arms, hands short, thick, and hairy to the very fingers'-ends; his legs were somewhat bowed, and their enormous calves betrayed his vast strength. This man presented, in a word, the exaggeration of everything short, thick-set, and condensed, in the type of the Hercules Farnese. As to the expression of ferocity which glared over his hideous phiz, and the restless, wild, and fierce look, more like a wild beast's than a human being's, it is impossible to depict them.

The woman who accompanied the Schoolmaster was old, and rather neatly dressed in a brown gown, with a plaid shawl of red and black check, and a white cap. Rudolph saw her profile; her green eye, hooked nose, skinny lips, sharp chin, and countenance at once wicked and cunning, reminded him involun-

tarily of the Screech-Owl, that horrible woman of whom Fleur-de-Marie had been the victim. He was just about to make this observation to the girl, when he saw her suddenly turn pale whilst looking with silent terror at the hideous companion of the Schoolmaster. At length, seizing Rudolph's arm with a trembling hand, Goualeuse said, in a low voice, 'Oh, the Owl! the Screech-Owl! the one-eyed woman!"

At this moment the Schoolmaster, after having exchanged a few words in a whisper with Barbillon, came leisurely to the table where Rudolph, the Goualeuse, and the Slasher were sitting, and addressing himself to Fleur-de-Marie, in a hoarse voice, the ruffian said:

"I say, my pretty miss, you must leave this pair of duffers, and come with me."

Goualeuse, making no reply, pressed more closely to Rudolph, her teeth chattering with fright.

"I shan't be jealous of my dear man-eater!" added the Owl, bursting into a loud laugh. She had not yet recognized in Goualeuse her old victim.

"Well, little white-face, do you hear me?" said the monster, advancing. "If you don't come, I'll poke your eye out, and make you a match for the Screech-Owl. As for you with the eye-brows on your lip," said he, addressing Rudolph, "if you don't hand the wench over the table to me, I'll smash you."

"Oh, for the love of heaven, defend me!" cried Goualeuse to Rudolph, clasping her hands. Then, reflecting that she was about to expose him to great danger, she added, in a low voice—

"No, no, do not move, M. Rudolph; if he approaches me, I will scream out for help, and for fear of a disturbance which will bring the police, the Ogress will take my part."

"Be quiet, my child," said Rudolph, calmly eyeing the Schoolmaster; "you are beside me—you shan't stir; and as this ugly-looking bloke makes you and me sick, why I will kick him out."

"You!" said the Schoolmaster.

"I," replied Rudolph. In spite of the efforts of Goualeuse, he rose from the table.

Despite his hardihood, the Schoolmaster retreated a step or two, so terrifying was Rudolph's face, and his eyes especially so fiery. There are certain glances of the eye which have irresistible magnetism, and several celebrated duellists are said to owe their bloody triumphs to this fascinating power, which unmans, paralyses, and destroys their adversaries. The Schoolmaster trembled, and, for once distrustful of his giant strength, felt under his blouse for his long cut-and-thrust knife. A murder, no doubt, would have stained the tap, if the Screech-Owl, taking the Schoolmaster by the arm, had not screamed out, "A minute, a minute, my man; let me have a say: you shall serve out those two *muffs* all the same presently."

The Schoolmaster looked at her with astonishment. For some minutes she had been gazing at Fleur-de-Marie with fixed and increasing attention, as if trying to refresh her memory. At length her doubts were cleared up, and she recognized the Goualeuse.

"Is it possible?" shrieked the one-eyed wretch, clasping her hands in astonishment. "It is the Nimming Kid, who stole my barley-sugar. But where have you sprung from? It must be the cokeman (devil) who sent you," added she, shaking her clenched fist at the girl. "You have tumbled into my clutches again, have you? But be easy; if I do not pull out your teeth, I will have out of your eyes every tear in your body. Come, no playing innocent! You don't know what I mean? Why, I have found out the people who had you before you were handed over to me. The Schoolmaster saw at the galleys the man who brought you to my shed when you were a brat, and he has proofs that the people who had you first were regular peacocks!"

"My parents! you know them, then?" cried Fleur-de-Marie.

"Whether I know them or not, you shan't have a hand in. The secret is mine and my bully's, and I will tear out his tongue rather than he shall blab it. Ha! that makes you blubber, does it, Nimming Kid?"

"Alas! no," said Goualeuse, with bitterness of accent; "*now* I do not care ever to know my parents."

While the Owl was speaking, the Schoolmaster had resumed his assurance, after looking askance at Rudolph. He could not believe that a young man of such slight and graceful make could for a moment contend with him; and, confident in his brutal force, he approached the defender of Goualeuse, and said to the Screech-Owl, in a tone of authority: "Hold your jaw, I'll smash this fine fellow, and then the fair lady may fancy me in preference."

With one bound Rudolph leaped over the table.

"Take care of my plates!" screamed the Ogress.

The Schoolmaster stood on the defensive, his hands up, his chest advanced, firmly planted on his broad loins, and, as one might say, supported archwise on one of his enormous legs, which resembled a baluster of stone. The moment Rudolph sprung at him, the door of the tap was violently opened, and the charcoal-man before noticed, and who was upwards of six feet high, rushed into the apartment, hurled the Schoolmaster reeling on one side, and coming up to Rudolph, whispered to him in German: "Your highness, the countess and her brother are at the end of the street!"

At these words, Rudolph made an impatient and angry start, threw a louis on the counter, and hastily made for the door.

The Schoolmaster attempted to arrest Ru-

dolph's progress, but he, turning round, gave him two or three blows, straight from the shoulder, over the nose and eyes with such stunning effect that the brute staggered, and fell heavily against the table.

"Hooray for Hooroar! those are *my* blows, and no mistake!" cried the Slasher: "a few more lessons like that and I shall be up to it."

Recovering himself after a few seconds, the Schoolmaster rushed off in pursuit of Rudolph, but he had disappeared with the charcoal-man in the dark labyrinth of the City streets, and the ruffian found it impossible to come up with him.

As the Schoolmaster returned, boiling with rage, two persons approaching from the opposite side to that by which Rudolph had disappeared, entered the tap in great haste, and out of breath, as if they had been running a long way. Their first movement was to cast hasty glances round the room.

"How unfortunate!" said one of them: "he has gone, and another opportunity is lost."

The new comers spoke in English. Goualeuse, terrified at her meeting with the Owl, and dreading the threats of the Schoolmaster, profited by the tumult and confusion caused by the arrival of the two fresh guests in the drinking den, and quietly gliding out by the half-opened door, left the room.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. THOMAS SEYTON AND LADY MACGREGOR.

THE two persons who now entered the tap room belonged to an entirely different class from those who generally frequented it. The one, tall and erect, had almost white hair, black eyebrows and whiskers, a brown, strongly marked countenance, and a stiff, formal air. His long frock-coat was buttoned up to the throat in military style. We shall call this personage Mr. Thomas Seyton. His companion was young, pale, and handsome, and appeared about thirty-three or thirty-four years of age. His hair, eyebrows, and eyes, of a deep black, contrasted strongly with the pure whiteness of his face. By his step, the smallness of his stature, and the delicacy of his features, it was easy to detect in this person a woman in male attire.

The female was Countess Sarah Macgregor. We shall hereafter inform our readers of the motives and events which had brought the countess and her brother into this low den.

"Thomas, call for something to drink, and ask the people here about him; perhaps we may learn something," said Sarah, speaking in English.

The man with white hair and black eyebrows seated himself at a table, while Sarah was wiping her forehead, and said to the Ogress, in very good French, and almost with a foreign accent: "Madame, let us have something to drink, if you please."

The entrance of these two persons into the boozing ken, excited lively attention. Their dress, their manners, announced that they never frequented such low public-houses; whilst, by their restless manner and disturbed countenances, it might be judged that some very powerful motive had led them to this quarter. The Slasher, the Schoolmaster, and the Screech-Owl watched them with eager curiosity.

Surprised at the appearance of such strange guests, the Ogress shared in the general wonderment. Thomas Seyton said a second time, and with an impatient tone, "We have called for something to drink, madame; pray be good enough to serve us."

Mother Ponisse, flattered by their courtesy, left her counter, and approaching graciously her new customers, rested her hands on their table, and said, "Will you have a pint of wine in measure, or a sealed bottle?"

"Let us have a bottle of wine, glasses, and some water."

The Ogress served them. Thomas Seyton threw her a half-crown piece, and refused the change, which she offered to him.

"Keep it for yourself, my good hostess, and take a glass of wine with us."

"You are very polite, sir," said Mother Ponisse, regarding the countess's brother with as much surprise as gratitude.

"But tell me," said he, "we had appointed to meet one of our friends in a public-house in this street, and have, perhaps, come to the wrong house."

"This is the White Rabbit, at your service, sir."

"Oh, that's right, then," said Thomas, making a sign to Sarah; "yes, it was at the White Rabbit that we were to meet him."

"Aye, and there are not two White Rabbits in this street," said the Ogress, with an air of consequence. "But what sort of a person is your friend?"

"Tall and slender, with light chestnut-coloured hair and moustache," said Seyton.

"Oh, I see! Why that's the man who was here just now. A charcoal-man, very tall and stout, came in and looked for him, and they went out together."

"The very man we are in search of," said Tom.

"Were they alone here?" asked Sarah.

"Why, the charcoal-man only came in for a moment, but your comrade supped here with Goualeuse and the Slasher;" and the Ogress pointed out the only remaining guest of Rudolph, who still remained in the place.

Thomas and Sarah turned towards the Slasher. After contemplating him for a few moments, Sarah said, in English, to her companion: "Do you know this man?"

"No; Karl lost sight of Rudolph when he

entered these dark streets. Seeing Murphy, disguised as a charcoal-man, lurking about this house, and every now and then peeping through the windows, he thought there was something on foot, and he came and told us. But Murphy, no doubt, recognized him."

During this conversation, held in a low tone, in a foreign language, the Schoolmaster said to the Owl, glancing at Tom and Sarah: "This *flat* has popped a big white 'un on the Ogress. It is just about twelve, and rains and blows like the devil. When they namouse we'll dog'em, and I'll garotte the furriner. As he's got his woman with him, he's safe not to make much row."

If Tom and Sarah had heard this foul language, they would not have understood it, and therefore would not have detected the plot hatching against them.

"Keep quiet, my blade," replied the Owl; "If the mott sings out for the police, I have my vitriol in my pocket, and I'll break the bottle on her snout—nothing like Godfrey's Lixer to quiet crying children," she added. "But tell me, shall we not *grab* the kid the first time we come across her? If we can once get her to our *crib*, we'll rub her nose in the burning-fluid; that will cure her of being too stuck-up for her beauty for the future."

"Capital! I am determined to marry you some day or other," said the Schoolmaster; "for courage and ability, your equal is not to be found. I made up my mind about that the night of the grazier's business. 'That's the woman for me,' said I; 'she works better than a man.'"

"And you said right, my blade; for if the Skeleton had had a blowen like me to show him the way, he wouldn't have been caught dulling his sticker on that cove's guzzle."

"It's all up with him now, and there's no chance of his leaving the *jug*, till he comes out to be made a head shorter."

"What strange language these people talk!" said Sarah, who had involuntarily heard the last few words of the conversation between the Schoolmaster and the Owl. She then added, pointing to the Slasher: "If we question this man about Rudolph, perhaps he may be able to answer us."

"We can but try," answered Thomas, who said to the Slasher, "Comrade, we expected to find a friend of ours in this cabaret; he supped here with you, it seems. Perhaps, as you know him, you can tell us which way he went?"

"I know him because he gave me a jolly good hiding two hours ago, in defence of Goualeuse."

"Had you never seen him before?"

"Never; we met by chance in the alley which leads to Red Arm's crib."

"Hostess, another sealed bottle; and let it be the best," said Thomas Seyton.

Sarah and he had hardly moistened their lips from their still full glasses; but Mother Ponisse, all anxiety, no doubt, to pay proper respect to the best bin in her cellar, had filled and emptied hers several times.

"And be so good as to put it on the table where that gentleman sits, if he will accept it," added Thomas, who, with Sarah, seated themselves beside the Slasher, who seemed as much astonished as flattered by this politeness.

The Schoolmaster and his partner continued to converse, in an under tone, on their sinister projects.

The bottle being brought, and Sarah and her brother having seated themselves with the Slasher and the Ogress, who had considered a second invitation quite superfluous, the conversation was resumed.

"You told us, my good fellow, that you met our friend Rudolph in the house where Red Arm lives?" inquired Thomas Seyton, touching glasses with the Slasher.

"That's about the figure," replied the latter, as he emptied his glass at a draught.

"A very singular name. What is this Red Arm?"

"He gives the shovel-noses the slip," said the Slasher, in a careless tone; and then he added: "This is famous wine, Mother Ponisse."

"If you think so, don't leave your glass empty, my fine fellow," said Thomas Seyton, filling the other's glass.

"Here's luck!" said he, "and your little friend's, who—but lay low's the word. 'If my aunt was a man, she'd be my uncle,' as the saying is. I'm fly to tell *dear* from weni-*son*!"

Sarah coloured slightly, as her brother continued: "I did not exactly understand you about Red Arm. Rudolph came out of his house, no doubt?"

"I told you that Red Arm gravels the ground-sharks!"

Seyton looked at the speaker with surprise, and said, "What do you mean by 'shovels' and 'gravel'?—What do you call it?"

"Runs the preventive off their pins; he's a smug-gu-lar, I suppose you would say; but it seems you can't *patter flash*?"

"My good fellow, I don't understand you."

"I see you can't come upright man's lingo, like M. Rudolph."

"Eh?" said Seyton, looking at Sarah, with an air of surprise.

"Oh! you are duffers; but Rudolph is an *out-and-outer*, that he is. Though he's only a fan-painter, he's as *down* as a hammer. However, since you can't speak this beautiful tongue, I tell you plain, Red Arm is a smuggler, and, more than that, has a small tavern on the Champs Elysees. I say, without splitting upon him, that he is a smuggler, for he makes no secret of it, but braves it under the very smellers of the custom-house officers. Buff (set down) a charge to him, if you can; Red Arm's up to snuff any two Sundays in the week."

"And what could Rudolph want at the house of this man?" asked Sarah.

"Really, sir, or madame, which you please, I know nothing about anything, as true as I drink this glass of wine. To-night, I was joking with Goualeuse, who thought I was going to belt her, and she ran up the alley to Red Arm's ken, and I followed her; it was as dark as pitch. Instead of striking Goualeuse, I stumbled on Master Rudolph, who gave me my change in rare coin! Oh, yes, especially the rattle of blows at the finish. My eyes! he did bash my conk! But he's promised to teach me that move, and to——"

"What sort of a man is Red Arm?" asked Seyton. "What does he sell?"

"Red Arm? Well, if ever! he sells everything he is forbidden to sell, and does everything forbidden to be done. That's his trade, Mother Ponisse, don't you say?"

"Oh! he's a boy with more than one finger to his hand," answered Ogress. "He is, besides, principal occupier of a certain house in the Rue du Temple—a funny sort of a crib, to be sure: but that's neither here nor there," added she, fearful of having said too much.

"What is Red Arm's address in that street?" asked Thomas Seyton of the Slasher.

"Number 13, sir."

"Perhaps we may learn something there," said Seyton, in a low voice, to his sister. "I will send Karl to-morrow."

"As you know M. Rudolph," said the Slasher, you may boast of a staunch friend and no tea-pot washings! If it had not been for the charcoal-man, he would have walked into the Schoolmaster, who is there in the corner with the Screech-Owl. May I never stir, I can hardly keep my pickers off the old wretch; I should like to smash her, when I think of her treatment of Goualeuse; but let's cork up for this once—'a blow delayed is not a blow lost,' as the saying is."

Midnight sounded from the Guildhall. The tavern lamp shed but a dim and flickering light. With the exception of the Slasher and his two companions, the Schoolmaster and the Owl, all the guests of the tap had retired one by one.

The Schoolmaster said, in an under tone, to the Screech-Owl, "If we go and lay bones in the court across the way, we'll be able to *pipe* the *swells* when they come out, and know which way to follow them. If they turn to the left, we'll wait for them at the corner of the Rue Saint Eloi; if they go to the right, we will meet them by the ruins close to the Tripe-market.

"The street's up close by, and I've got a prime idea!"

The Schoolmaster and the Owl went towards the door.

"You won't *wet your whistles* to-night, then?" said the Ogress.

"No, Mother Ponisse, we only came in to shelter from the weather," said the Schoolmaster, as he went out with the hag.

CHAPTER VII.

"YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE!"

THE noise made by the slam of the door aroused Seyton and Sarah from their reverie; they rose. Being thanked for the information he had given them, the Slasher went out, the wind blowing with redoubled violence, and the rain falling in torrents.

The Schoolmaster and his friend, hidden in an alley exactly opposite the tap, saw the Slasher roll along on that side of the street on which the ruined house was situated. Very soon his steps, rendered somewhat irregular by the frequent libations of the evening, were unheard amidst the whistling of the storm and the torrents of rain which dashed against the sides of houses.

Seyton and Sarah left the tavern, in spite of the tempest, and took a direction opposite to that of the Slasher.

"They're in the trap," whispered the Schoolmaster to his companion. "Out with your vitriol, and mind what you're about."

"Let us take off our shoes, and they won't hear us follow them," responded the Owl.

"You are right—always right; let us tread like cats, my old darling."

The hideous couple took off their shoes, and glided stealthily along in the shadow of the houses. By means of this stratagem, they followed so lightly, that, although within a few steps of Sarah and her companion, they did not hear them.

"Fortunately our hackney-coach is at the end of the street, or we should get wet through. Are you not cold, Sarah?"

"Perhaps we shall be able to obtain some information from this Red Arm, the smuggler," said Sarah, in a pensive tone, without noticing her brother's question.

Suddenly the latter stopped, and said, "I have taken the wrong street; I ought to have gone to the right on leaving the gin-stores; we must pass a house in ruins to reach the hackney-coach; we must retrace our steps."

The Schoolmaster and the Owl, who had followed closely on the heels of their intended victims, retreated into the dark doorway of a house close by, unperceived by the other pair, who, on turning back, almost touched them as they passed.

"By all that's lucky!" whispered the Schoolmaster, "I'm glad they're gone that way, for if the buck rides rusty I know what to do."

Sarah and her brother, having again passed the White Rabbit, arrived close by the dilapidated house, the unroofed cellars of which formed a kind of gulf on the line of street in that direction. Quick as thought the Schoolmaster, with a bound strong and agile as a tiger, seized Seyton with one of his enormous hands by the throat, and exclaimed, "Your money, or I will throw you into this hole!"

Then the robber, pushing Seyton backwards,

threw him off his balance, and with one hand held him suspended over the mouth of the deep excavation; whilst with his other hand, he grasped Sarah's arm as if in a vice. Before her escort could make any movement, the Screech-Owl had emptied his pockets with marvellous dexterity. Sarah did not utter a cry, nor offer the slightest resistance. She only said, in a calm tone, "Give up your purse, brother;" and then addressing the robber, "We will make no noise, do not ill-treat us."

The Owl, having very carefully searched the pockets of the two victims of this descent, said to Sarah, "Let's see your hands, if you've got any rings. No," said the old wretch, grumblingly—"no, not one—you just are a swindler to show on the streets."

Seyton did not lose his presence of mind during this scene, although sudden as it was unexpected.

"Will you strike a bargain? My pocket-book contains papers quite useless to you; return it to me, and to-morrow I will give you twenty-five louis," said he to the Schoolmaster, whose hand slightly relaxed its vice-like hold.

"Kerbosh! you want to lay a trap for us, do you!" replied the robber. "Be off, and don't look behind you; you may thank your stars for getting away so cheaply."

"One moment," said the Owl; "if he behaves like a gent, he shall have his pocket-book. There is a way." Then, addressing Seyton, she asked, "You know the plain of St. Denis?"

"Yes."

"Do you know St. Ouen."

"Yes."

"Opposite St. Ouen, at the end of the road to La Revolte, there is a level plain. Across the fields one may see a long way. Come there to-morrow morning, by yourself, bring your shiners with you, and you will find me and the pocket-book. Tip me the ready, and I'll hand over the documents."

"But he'll have you nicked up."

"Not a bit of it! I've been *there* before. I've only one eye, but that's a piercer; and if the *swell* comes with the M.P. (municipal police), he'll not find me; I'll have *hooked it*."

A sudden idea seemed to strike Sarah, and she said to the ruffian, "Will you gain some money?"

"Always open."

"Did you see, in the place we have just left—for I know you again—did you see the person whom the charcoal-man came in search of?"

"A chap with the soup-strainers (moustaches)? Yes, I would have given that humbug a *steel draught*, if he had waited long enough. He stunned me with two drives on the head, and knocked me over the table—the first time that any man ever served me so. Curse him! but I'll see his clothes scalded some day!"

"He is the man I mean," said Sarah.

"Is he?" cried the Schoolmaster; "a thousand francs, and I'll make him fit for the 'Tomical Mooseum!"

"Wretch! I do not seek his life," replied Sarah.

"What *do* you want then?"

"Come to-morrow to the plain of St. Denis; you will there find my companion," she replied: "you will see that he is alone, and he will tell you what to do. If you succeed, it shall not be one but two thousand francs that I will give you."

"My blade," said the Owl, in a low tone, to the Schoolmaster, "there's chink on the loose; these are a *spicy lot*, who wish to give a turn to an enemy, and that enemy is the gassy cove you want to *smash*. Let's go to the place and meet him. Two thousand francs! My eye!—they are worth looking arter!"

"Well, my woman shall come," said the Schoolmaster. "Tell her what you want, and I'll consider over't——"

"Be it so, to-morrow at one."

"At one o'clock."

"In the plain of St. Denis?"

"The plain of St Denis.'

"Between St. Ouen and the road to La Revolte, at the end of the road?"

"Agreed."

"And I will return you the pocket-book."

"And you shall have the five hundred francs promised, and we will settle about the other affair, if you are reasonable."

"Now then, you go to the right, and we to the left. Don't attempt to follow us—or else ——"And the Schoolmaster and his accomplice hurried off, whilst Thomas Seyton and his sister hastened in a contrary direction, towards Notre Dame.

An invisible witness had been present during this scene; it was the Slasher, who had gone down the cellars of the dilapidated house to shelter from the rain. The proposal which Sarah had made to the robber respecting Rudolph deeply interested the Slasher. Alarmed at the perils which menaced his new friend, he regretted he could not shield him against them. His hatred of the Schoolmaster and the Owl might have something to do with this friendly feeling.

The Slasher resolved to warn Rudolph of the danger which threatened him; but how was he to do so? He had forgotten the address of the self-styled fan-painter. Rudolph might never again visit the tapis-franc, and then how could he warn him? While thus reflecting, the Slasher had mechanically followed Seyton and Sarah; he saw them get into a coach which was waiting near Notre Dame. The coach started: the Slasher jumped up behind. At one o'clock it stopped on the Boulevard of the Observatory, and Sarah and her brother disappeared down one of the narrow streets adjacent. The night was very dark—the Slasher could recognize nothing; and that he might know, the

next day, the place where he then was, he drew from his pocket his clasp-knife, and cut a large and deep notch in one of the trees at the corner of the entrance. He then returned to his lodging, from which he was a long way off.

For the first time during a long period, the Slasher tasted the sweets of a profound sleep, which was not once interrupted by the horrible vision of the "Sergeants' slaughter-house," as his peculiar language had it.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WALK.

ON the morrow after the different events we have just related had occurred, a bright autumnal sun shone in a serene sky. The tempest of the previous night had blown over. Although always obscured by the height of the houses, the filthy neighbourhood into which the reader has accompanied us, seemed less horrible in the light of a fine day.

Whether Rudolph no longer feared to meet two persons whom he had shunned overnight, or did not care any longer to evade them, about eleven o'clock in the morning he entered the Rue aux Feves, and made his way towards the tavern of the Ogress.

Rudolph was still dressed as a workman; but there was a remarkable neatness in his costume. His new blouse, open at the neck, disclosed a red woollen shirt, studded with silver buttons; while the collar of another shirt, of white linen, fell over a black silk cravat, tied carelessly round his neck. From beneath his sky-blue velvet cap, with glazed leather peak, escaped locks of chestnut hair. Brightly-polished boots replaced the heavy iron-bound shoes of the previous evening, and displayed to advantage a well-formed foot, which looked all the smaller from appearing out of a loose pantaloon of olive velveteen. This costume was well calculated to set off the elegant form and carriage of Rudolph, which combined rare grace with agility and power. The Ogress was sunning herself at the door of her hotel, when Rudolph presented himself.

"Your servant, young man. You have come, no doubt, for your change of the twenty francs," she said, with a sort of respect; not thinking it exactly prudent to forget that the Slasher's conqueror had thrown a louis on her counter the previous evening. "There is seventeen francs ten sous coming to you; but that's not all. There was somebody here asking for you last night—a tall gentleman, well-dressed, who had with him a young woman disguised as a man. They drank my best wine with the Slasher."

"Oh! they drank with the Slasher, did they?"

"Well, what did they say to him?"

"When I say they drank with him, I am wrong; they scarce wetted their lips with the wine and——"

"But I asked you what they said to the Slasher?"

"Oh! they talked about this, that, and the other thing—of Red Arm, the rain, and fine weather."

"Do they know Red Arm?"

"More the other way. The Slasher told them who he was, and that you——"

"Well, that is not what I want to know."

"You want your change?"

"Yes, and I want to take Goualeuse to pass the day in the country."

"Oh! that's impossible, my boy."

"Why?"

"Why? because she may never come back again. Her *togs* belong to me, not reckoning about a hundred francs she owes me for *grub* and *bub* for the six weeks she has lodged with me; and if I didn't know her to be as honest as the day, I should never let her go beyond the street corner at most."

"Goualeuse owes you ninety francs?"

"Ninety-six francs ten sous; but what's that to you, my lad? Are you going to do the grand, and pay it for her?"

"Yes," said Rudolph, throwing five louis on the Ogress's counter; "and now what's your price for the duds she wears?"

The old woman, amazed, examined the louis one after the other with an air of doubt and suspicion.

"What! are you afraid that I have given you duffers? Try 'em in your cramp, or send and get change for one, and have done with it. I say again, how much for the rags the poor girl is wearing?"

The Ogress, divided between the desire to make a good harvest, her surprise to see a workman with so much money, the fear of being cheated, and the hope of gaining more, was silent for a moment, and then replied—

"Oh, them clothes is well worth a hundred francs."

"What! such rags as those. Come, now, I tell you what; you shall keep the change I left last night and I'll give you another dragon, and no more. If I give you all I have, I shall rob the tramps, who have a right to my alms."

"Well, then, my boy, I'll keep my things, and Goualeuse shall stay where she is. I have a right to put my own price on my goods, I suppose?"

"May the devil grill you some day as you deserve! Here's your money; go and look for Goualeuse."

The Ogress pocketed the gold, imagining that the workman had committed a robbery, or received a bequest, and then said with a hideous leer:

"Upon my honour! why not go upstairs, and find Goualeuse yourself; she'll be very glad to see you, for, on the word of Mother Ponisse, she has taken a fancy to you."

"No, no; you fetch her, and tell her I will take her into the country; that's all I want you to say; not a word about my having paid you her debt."

"Why not?"

"What's that to you?"

"To be sure, it's no matter to me; I would rather that she should still fancy herself in my debt."

"Will you button up your lip, and do as I bid you?"

"Oh! what a spiteful look! I pity anybody who has a row with you. Well, I'm going." The Ogress went upstairs.

After a few minutes she came down again.

"Goualeuse would not believe me, and turned as red as a poppy when she found you were here; but when I told her that I would give her leave to spend the day in the country, I really thought she would have gone crazy—for the first time in her life she was ready to throw her arms about my neck."

"Oh, no doubt—for joy at leaving you."

Fleur-de-Marie entered at this moment, dressed as on the previous evening, with her gown of brown stuff, her little orange shawl tied behind her, and her check handkerchief over her head, leaving only two thick plaits of light hair visible. She blushed when she saw Rudolph, and looked down with an air of confusion.

"Would you like to pass the day in the country with me, my child?" said Rudolph.

"With joy, M. Rudolph," said Goualeuse, "if Mother Ponisse will permit me."

"You've my leave, my little puss, because you behave yourself. Come, kiss me afore you're off."

The old hag presented her carbuncled face to Fleur-de-Marie. The unfortunate girl, overcoming her disgust, offered her forehead to the lips of the Ogress, but Rudolph, by a sudden push with his eldow, thrust the old woman back within her counter, took Fleur-de-Marie's arm, and left the taproom amidst a volley of maledictions from Mother Ponisse.

"Take care, M. Rudolph," said Goualeuse; "the Ogress is so spiteful, she will, perhaps, throw something at you."

"Oh, don't be alarmed, my girl. But what ails you? you seem embarrassed—sad. Do you regret having come with me?"

"No, indeed, quite the contrary; but—but—you give me your arm."

"Well, what then?"

"You are a workman, and some one may tell your master that they saw you with me, and *that* might do you an injury; masters do not like their workmen to be unsteady."

Goualeuse gently disengaged her arm from Rudolph's, adding, "Go on alone; I will follow you to the barrier; and when in the fields I will rejoin you."

"Nay, fear nothing," said Rudolph, touched by this delicate thoughtfulness, and again giving his arm to Fleur-de-Marie; "my master does not live in this quarter; besides we shall find a hackney-coach on the Quai aux Fleurs."

"As you please, M. Rudolph; I only spoke lest you might get into trouble."

"I believe so, and thank you for it. But, tell me frankly, is there no particular spot in the country you wish to visit?"

"I have no preference, M. Rudolph, so that it be the country. The weather is so fine, and the beautiful air is so good to breathe! Do you know that for these six weeks I have not been further than the flower-market? And now the Ogress must have great confidence in me, or she would never allow me to leave the City."

"And when you went to the market, was it to buy flowers?"

"Oh, no, I had no money; I went only to look at them, and breathe their delicious odour. During the half-hour the Ogress allowed me to pass on the Quai on market days, I felt so happy, that I forgot all."

"And on returning to the Ogress, in those filthy streets?"

"Oh, then, I became more sad than when I set out; and I had to suppress my tears, that I might not be beaten. Then at the market, what made me so envious—oh! so envious—was to see neat, clean little workwomen tripping gaily away each with a large bunch of flowers in her arms."

"I am sure that, if you had had but a few flowers in your own window, they would have been company."

"Indeed they would, M. Rudolph. Only think, the Ogress, on her birthday, knowing my taste, gave me a little rose-bush. If you only knew how happy it made me!—I was never weary of looking at my rose-bush. I amused myself in counting its leaves—its flowers; but the City air is bad, and at the end of two days it began to wither. Then—but—you are going to laugh at me, M. Rudolph."

"No, no; go on."

"Well, then, I asked the Ogress to let me go out, and take my rose-bush a walk, just as I would have taken out a child. Yes, I carried it to the Quai, fancying that to be with other flowers, in the fresh and balmy air, might do it good. I sprinkled its poor fading leaves in the clear water of the fountain, and then, to dry it, I placed it for a full quarter of an hour in the sun. Dear little rose-bush! it never saw the sun in the City, any more than myself; for in our street it never gets lower than the eaves. At last I went home again: well, I assure you, M. Rudolph, that, thanks to these walks, my rose-bush lived perhaps ten days longer than it otherwise would."

"I believe it; but when it died, it must have been a severe loss to you."

"I wept for it: for that was indeed a sorrow. And then, M. Rudolph—for you know that one may love flowers although you haven't any of your own. You can well feel that. Alas! I felt very grateful to my poor rose-tree

for blooming so kindly for me, although—although—I was——"

Goualeuse, bowing down her head, became scarlet with shame.

"Unhappy child! with this feeling of your wretched position, you must often——"

"Have wished to end it, you mean, M. Rudolph?" said Goualeuse, interrupting her companion. "Oh, indeed, I have! More than once this last month have I looked over the parapet on to the Seine; then I turned to the flowers, and to the sun, and I said, 'The river will be always there; I am but sixteen and a half—who knows?'"

"When you said 'who knows,' then you hoped."

"Yes."

"Come, what did you hope?"

"To find some kind soul who would procure me work, so that I might be able to leave the Ogress; this hope consoled me. Then I said to myself, 'I am very miserable, but I have never injured anybody; if I had had anyone to advise me, I should not be where I am. That lightened my sorrow a little, which had greatly deepened at the loss of my rose-bush," added Goualeuse, with a sigh.

"Always in such grief——"

"Yes! but see, here it is."

Goualeuse drew from her pocket a little bundle of twigs, carefully cut and tied with a rose-coloured ribbon.

"You have preserved it?"

"Indeed, I have! it is all I possess in the world."

"What! have you nothing of your own?"

"Nothing."

"But this coral necklace?"

"It belongs to the Ogress."

"And not a piece of riband—a cap—a handkerchief?"

"No, nothing — nothing but the dead branches of my poor rose-bush—that is why I so treasure it."

Rudolph and Goualeuse had reached the Quai aux Fleurs, where a coach was waiting. Rudolph assisted the Goualeuse, getting in afterwards himself, saying to the coachman: "To Saint Denis; I will then tell you which road to take."

The coach went on. The sun was bright, the heavens without a cloud, whilst the clear and fresh air circulated freely through the open windows.

"See, here is a woman's cloak," said Goualeuse, discovering that she had seated herself on the garment without noticing it.

"Yes, it is for you, my child; I brought it for fear you should feel cold."

Little accustomed to such forethought, the poor girl looked at Rudolph with surprise.

"Oh, M. Rudolph, how kind you are! it makes me quite ashamed——"

"Because I am kind?"

"No; but you do not speak as you did yesterday; you seem quite another person."

"Tell me, then, Fleur-de-Marie, which would you prefer, that I should remain the Rudolph of yesterday, or be the Rudolph of to-day?"

"I like you much better as you are now; yet yesterday I seemed to be more your equal." Then, as if correcting herself, and fearing to have degraded Rudolph, she said, "When I say your equal, M. Rudolph, I well know I never can be that."

"There is one thing in you which astonishes me, Fleur-de-Marie."

"What is that, M. Rudolph."

"You seem to have forgotten that the Screech-Owl said to you yesterday, that she knew the persons who had brought you up."

"Oh! I have not forgotten that; I thought of it last night, and I cried bitterly; but I am sure that it is not true. The one-eyed woman only invented that tale to make me miserable."

"But possibly the Owl may know more than you think. If it were so, should you not be delighted to be restored to your parents?"

"Alas! M. Rudolph, if my parents never loved me, what good would it be to me to discover them? They would not even wish to see me. And—and if they did ever love me, what shame I should bring on them—perhaps it would kill them!"

"If your parents ever loved you, Fleur-de-Marie, they will pity, pardon, and still love you. If they have deserted you, then, when they see the frightful lot to which their conduct has reduced you, their shame, their remorse will avenge you."

"What good is vengeance?"

"You are right; let us talk of it no more."

At this moment the carriage arrived near Saint Ouen, at the point where the roads of St. Denis and La Revolte branch off. Notwithstanding the monotony of the prospect, Fleur-de-Marie was so transported at seeing the fields, as she called them, that, forgetting the sad thoughts which the recollection of the Owl had awakened, her charming countenance beamed with delight. She leaned out of the window, clapped her hands, and cried, "Oh, M. Rudolph, how happy I am! The grass! the fields! Will you let me get out?—it is so fine! I should so like a run in those meadows."

"Let us run, then, my child. Stop, coachman."

"What, you too? Will your run, M. Rudolph?"

"I am taking my outing."

"Oh! what happiness, M. Rudolph!"

And Rudolph and Goualeuse, taking each other's hand, ran themselves out of breath across a large meadow newly mown. It would be impossible to describe the transports and exclamations of childish joy, the intense delight of Fleur-de-Marie. Poor thing! so long a prisoner, she breathed the free air with unbounded pleasure. She ran, came back, stopped, and then raced off again with renewed rapture. At sight of the daisies and buttercups, Goualeuse could not refrain from

fresh exclamations of joy—she did not leave one flower that was large enough to gather. After having run about in this way, she became fatigued, for she had lost the habit of exercise, and stopped to take breath, sitting down on the trunk of a fallen tree, lying at the edge of a deep ditch.

The fair and transparent complexion of Fleur-de-Marie, rather pale in general, shone with the brightest colour. Her large blue eyes sparkled with a soft brilliancy, her vermilion lips, partly opened to recover her breath, revealed their two rows of dewy pearl; her bosom throbbed under her little threadbare orange shawl, and she placed one of her hands upon her heart, as if to restrain its quickened pulsation, while with the other she proffered to Rudolph the bouquet of wild flowers which she had just gathered. Nothing could be more charming than the combination of innocence and pure joy which beamed on her ingenuous features. So soon as Fleur-de-Marie could speak, she said to Rudolph, in accents of unalloyed delight, and with a gratitude nearly akin to piety, "How good is heaven to have granted us so fine a day!"

A tear sprang to Rudolph's eye at hearing this poor, despised, forsaken, lost one utter this cry of thankfulness and happiness to the Creator for the mere enjoyment of a ray of sunshine and the sight of a green field!

Rudolph was aroused from his reverie by an unexpected incident.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SURPRISE.

We have said that Goualeuse was sitting on the trunk of a fallen tree, at the edge of a deep ditch. Suddenly a man, springing from the bottom of this excavation, shook aside the rubbish under which he had concealed himself, and burst into a loud fit of laughter. Goualeuse turned round, with a cry of alarm. It was the Slasher!

"Don't be afraid, my girl," said the Slasher, when he saw her alarm, as she sought refuge with her companion. "By all that's lucky, Master Rudolph, here's a glorious meeting! Ha! ha! you didn't expect it, no more than I."

Then he added, in a serious tone, "Listen, master. People may say what they please, but there is something above there in the air over our heads that beats all out-doors; very wonderful, which seems to say to a fellow, 'Go where I sent you.' See how you two have been sent here! It gets the best of me."

"What are you doing there?" said Rudolph, greatly surprised.

"I was on the look-out in a matter that concerns you, master; but, what a rum start that you should come this werry moment into the werry neighbourhood of my country-house! There's something in all this—certainly there is something in it."

"But I ask you again, what are you doing there?"

"You'll know first pop; just give me time to take a squint round from your four-wheeled lighthouse yonder."

The Slasher ran towards the coach, which had stopped at some distance, mounted the box, looked hither and thither over the plain, with a rapid glance, and soon rejoined Rudolph.

"Will you explain to me the meaning of all this?"

"Patience, patience, master; one word more. Do you know the time?"

"Half-past twelve," said Rudolph, looking at his watch.

"Good; then we've got room. Screech-Owl will not be here this half-hour."

"Screech-Owl!" exclaimed Rudolph and Goualeuse simultaneously.

"Yes, Screech-Owl; in two words, master, here you are. Yesterday, after you left the ken, there came——"

"A tall man with a woman in male attire, who asked for me! I know that. What then?"

"They paid for my lush, and wanted to *pump* me about you. But I had nothing to tell them except that you had given me a licking; so I said I was acquainted with you so far as an ugly rap or two went—that I had learnt a lesson from you. But further—why, if I had known anything, they would have learnt no more; for come good, or come bad, M. Rudolph, we are friends, though the devil burn me if I know why; yet I feel for you the attachment which a bulldog feels for his master, since you told me that I had 'heart and honour;' but that's nothing, so there's an end of it. It's more than I can account for; so it is, and you're welcome to it, and may I not jib a-goin' down hill!"

"Thank you, my lad; but go on."

"The tall man and the lady in trousers, seeing that they could get nothing out of me, left the Ogress's, and so did I; they going towards the Palace of Justice, and I towards Notre Dame. On reaching the end of the street, I found it was raining cats and dogs—a regular flood. Hard by, there was a house being pulled down: says I to myself 'if this weather is to last long, I can sleep just as well here as in my own dog-hole. So I rolled myself into a sort of cellar, where I was under cover; I took for my bed an old beam, and for my pillow a heap of lath and plaster, and I was in no time snoozing like a king."

"What next?"

"I had taken something to drink with you, Master Rudolph. I had drunk too with the tall gent and the lady in the breeches, so you may believe my head was a little muddled; moreover, nothing lulls me into a good sound sleep like a pelting rain. I began to doze, and should soon have begun to snore, when

a noise startled me. I sat up and listened, and heard the Schoolmaster holding what I've heard called a friendly confab with somebody; I listened and listened—Crikey! what did I recognize?—the voice of the tall man who was at the tap with the woman shamming a man."

"They, in conference with the Schoolmaster and the Owl?" said Rudolph, with amazement.

"With the Schoolmaster and the Owl; they agreed to meet again on the morrow."

"That's to-day," said Rudolph.

"At one o'clock."

"This very instant!"

"Where the road branches off to St. Denis and La Revolte."

"That is here!"

"Exactly so, Master Rudolph; just at this very spot."

"The Schoolmaster! Pray be on your guard, M. Rudolph," exclaimed Fleur-de Marie.

"Calm yourself, my child, he will not come—the Screech-Owl alone will make her appearance."

"How could the man whom you saw at the drinking den with the disguised female be in communication with these two wretches?" said Rudolph.

"Upon my soul, I can't tell. I think I only awoke at the end of the business; for the tall man spoke of getting back his pocket-book, which the Owl was to bring with her, in exchange for five hundred francs. I think it likely the Schoolmaster had begun by robbing them, and that subsequently they begun to sing sweet, and come to friendly terms."

"It is very extraordinary."

"Good heavens! I tremble on your account, M. Rudolph," said Fleur-de-Marie.

"Master Rudolph is no chicken, my girl; but, as you say, there may be an ingun in pickle for him, and that is the reason I am here."

"Go on, my boy."

"The tall man and the woman have promised two thousand francs to the Schoolmaster, to do to you—I don't know what. The Owl is to be here now to return the pocket-book, and to know what is required from them, which she is to communicate to the Schoolmaster, who will undertake it."

Fleur-de-Marie shuddered. Rudolph smiled disdainfully.

"Two thousand francs to do mischief to you, Master Rudolph! That puts me in mind (not that I mean to make a comparison) that when I see a bill out for a dog lost, promising a hundred francs for fetching on him back, I say to myself, 'if you were lost, Slasher, no one would give a hundred farthings to find you.' Two thousand francs to do mischief to you! Who are you, then?"

"I will tell you by-and-bye."

"Enough, master. When I heard this proposal, says I to myself, 'I must find out these two swells who want to set the Schoolmaster on M. Rudolph; it may be worth something.' When they had gone away, I crept out of my hiding-place, and followed them like a mouse. The tall man and the woman got into a coach opposite the gate of Notre Dame; I cut behind, and we soon reached the Boulevard of the Observatory. It was dark as an oven; I could see nothing, so I nicked a tree, to find out the place in the morning."

"That's good, my boy."

"This morning I went there again. About ten paces from the tree, I found a narrow entrance, closed by a gate, and in the mud of the narrow entrance I saw little and large footsteps, and at the end of the avenue a small garden-gate, where the tracks ended, so the nest of the tall man and the woman must be there."

"Thanks, my brave fellow; you have done me good service, without knowing it."

"Hold hard, Master Rudolph, I thought it might be so, and that's why I did it."

"I know it, my good fellow, and I wish I could recompense your service more properly than by thanks; but unfortunately I am only a poor devil of a workman, although, as you say, two thousand francs are offered to do mischief to me. I will explain that to you——"

"Good, if agreeable to yourself; if not, 'tis all the same. You are threatened with something, and I object to *that;* the rest is your own look-out."

"I have an idea what they want. Listen to me. I have a secret for cutting fans in ivory by means of machinery; but the secret does not belong to me alone. I am awaiting the arrival of my partner to go to work, and, no doubt, it is the model of the machine which I have at home, that they are desirous of getting from me at any price, for a great deal of money is to be made by this discovery.

"The tall man and the gay bird in trousers, then, are——"

"The fan-makers with whom I have worked, and to whom I have refused my secret."

This explanation appeared satisfactory to the Slasher, whose perception was none of the brightest in some things, and he replied—

"Now I see it all. Oh, the crawlers! and they have not the pluck to do their dirty work themselves. But to finish my story. I will tell you what I said to myself this morning, 'I know where the tall man and Screech Owl have appointed to meet; I will go and wait for them. I have good legs; the lighterman who employs me will expect me—it's his loss, and that be hanged? I came here, saw the ditch, fetched an armful of litter from the straw-stack yonder, hid myself here up to my nose, and waited for the Owl. But, lo and behold! you came padding across the plain, and poor Goualeuse came and seated herself on the edge of my property; then, faith, I thought I'd

have a game, and jumping out of my hole, roared out like a pig that had been scalded."

"And what is your intention now?"

"To wait for the Owl, who, depend on't, will come first; then I'll try to overhear the jabber between her and the tall man, because that may be of service to you. There is nothing in the field but this trunk of a tree, and from here you may see all over the plain: it is as if it was here on purpose to sit down upon. The meeting-place of Screech-Owl is scarcely four paces off, at the turning of the road; no doubt they'll come and sit here, if they come at all. If I can't hear anything then, as soon as they separate, I will follow the Owl, who is sure to hang behind, and I'll pay her the score I owe her for the Goualeuse's tooth. I'll twist her neck round until out pops the name of the parents of the poor girl, for she says she knows them. What do you think of my idea, Master Rudolph?"

"It is very good, my lad; but there is one part which wants correcting."

"Oh, yes, Slasher, do not get yourself into a dangerous quarrel on account of me. If you beat Screech-Owl, the Schoolmaster——"

"You've said enough, my girl. The Screech-Owl shall not be let off this time. Thunder! 'tis because the Schoolmaster is her protector, that I will double her dose."

"Listen, my good fellow; I have a better means for avenging the Owl's cruelties to Goualeuse; you shall hear that another time. But now," said Rudolph, moving a few paces from Goualeuse, and lowering his voice, "will you render me a real service?"

"Speak, Master Rudolph."

"Does the Screech-Owl know you?"

"I saw her yesterday for the first time in the ken."

"Now, this is what you must do. You must first hide yourself; but when you see her come close to you, get out of the ditch——"

"And twist her neck?"

"No; don't be in a hurry. At present, the main thing is to prevent her speaking to the tall man. Seeing some one with her, he will not approach; if he does come near, do not quit her for an instant. He cannot make his proposition before you."

"If the man objects to my movements, I know what to give him; he is neither the Schoolmaster nor Master Rudolph. I'll be a regular shadow to the Owl; the man shall not say a word that I do not overhear. He will finish by running off, and then won't I have my little turn with the Screecher? I must have it; that will be my sweet toothful."

"Not yet; the one-eyed woman does not know whether you are one of the family, or not."

"No, unless the Schoolmaster has spoken of me to her, and told her that I have no taste for that line of business."

"If he has said so, you seem to have changed your principles."

"I?"

"Yes."

"Thousand thunders! Master Rudolph, I don't tumble to you. No larks! I don't half like that; you are trying to make me angry."

"You shall only do as you please; but you will not find that I propose anything that you need be ashamed of. The man gone, you must try to cajole the Owl. She will be furious at the good booty she will think she has missed through you; but you must try and soap her down, by telling her that you know of a tiptop crib to be jumped, and that you are waiting here for your *pal*, and that if the Schoolmaster likes to join you, there is plenty of blunt to be made."

"Capital! go on, go on!"

"After waiting an hour or so, say to her, 'My mate does not come—it is too bad;' and then you may make an appointment with the Owl and the Schoolmaster for to-morrow at an early hour. You understand?"

"I understand."

"And this evening you will remember to be at ten o'clock at the corner of the Champs Elysées and the Allee des Veuves, and there I will meet you and tell you the rest."

"If this be a trap, look out!—the Schoolmaster is a malicious wretch. You have beaten him, and, it's ten quid to a brass farden that he set's on killing you."

"Don't be alarmed."

"Burn me, but this here's a rum go! but do just as you like with me. I do not hesitate, for something tells me that there is a quartern baking for the Schoolmaster and the Owl. Hark'ee, one word more, if you please, M. Rudolph."

"Speak."

"I don't think you are the man to set a trap for the Schoolmaster to get him *nailed*. He is an out-and-out bad un, and deserves a hundred deaths; but to have him grabbed—I will not be one in that."

"Nor will I, my good fellow; but I have an account to settle with him and the Screech Owl, because they plot with those who plot against me; and we two will round on 'em completely, if you will assist me."

"Oh, well then, as the cock is as bad as the hen, I'll join you. But quick, quick!" cried the Slasher; "I see yonder a white speck, and that speck must be the Owl. Be off, and let me get into the ditch."

"And this evening at ten o'clock——"

"Corner of the Champs Elysées and the Allee des Veuves—agreed."

Fleur-de-Marie had not heard the latter part of this conversation between the Slasher and Rudolph. She again entered the coach with the companion of her excursion.

CHAPTER X.

CASTLES IN THE AIR.

AFTER this conversation with the Slasher, Rudolph remained for some moments abstracted and pensive; while Fleur-de-Marie, not daring to interrupt her companion's silence, gazed on him with a sweet sadness. At length Rudolph raised his head, and said, with a benevolent smile, "What are you thinking of, my child? I fear this meeting with the Slasher has been disagreeable to you; is it not so?—we were very happy before."

"Quite the contrary, M. Rudolph; for I think that the Slasher may be serviceable to you."

"Did not this man pass amongst the frequenters of the tap as having some good points in his character?"

"I do not know, M. Rudolph. Before yesterday's meeting, although I had frequently seen him, I had scarcely ever spoken to him, and always thought him as bad as the others."

"Let us think no more about that, my little Fleur-de-Marie. I should be sorry if I made you sad, when it is I who brought you out purposely that you might pass a happy day."

"Oh! I am very happy. It is so long since I have been out of Paris."

"Not since your grand jaunts with Dimpleton."

"True, M. Rudolph; that was in the spring; but though it is now autumn I enjoy it quite as much. How beautifully the sun shines!—look at those little gold-coloured clouds yonder—there, I mean; and that gentle hill, with its pretty white houses among the trees. How green the leaves still are, considering that it is the middle of October; is it not surprising, M. Rudolph? Ah me! in Paris the leaves wither so soon. And look! look beyond there! see that flight of pigeons! See, they are settling on the windmill. In the country, one can never be weary of looking round—everything is so amusing."

"It is, indeed, a pleasure to see how alive you are to those little details which form the true charms of a rural scene."

Fleur-de-Marie gazed upon the calm and smiling landscape before her, her countenance beaming with an expression of the purest joy.

"Down there, too, where they are burning brush in the ploughed fields, how the beautiful white smoke rises to mingle with the clouds! and that plough with the noble grey horses! If I were a man, how I should like to be a field-labourer, to follow the plough through the lovely fields, and see at a distance the vast waving woods! On such a delightful day as this, for instance, when one feels a sorrowful joy, and the words of melancholy songs come uncalled for to your memory, and bring soft tears into your eyes—such songs as 'Genevieve de Brabant'—do you know the song of 'Genevieve de Brabant,' M. Rudolph?"

"No, my child; but, if you are disposed, you shall sing it me by-and-bye; we have all the day before us."

At these words, by a harsh revulsion of thought, the picture of the pestilential hovel to which she must return at the close of this short and joyous day presented itself, and poor Goualeuse, unable to repress her tears, bowed her head between her hands and wept.

Rudolph, surprised at this emotion of the Goualeuse, said:

"What distresses you, Fleur-de-Marie; why do you weep?"

"Nothing—nothing, M. Rudolph;" and, drying her eyes, she endeavoured to smile, then added, "forgive me for being so sad, and pray don't notice it. I assure you I have no cause for grief—it was only a fancy. Now I am going to be merry."

"But you were so joyous a short time ago."

"Yes, and that's why I cried," answered Fleur-de-Marie unaffectedly, turning towards Rudolph, her large blue eyes filled with tears.

These words removed all doubt from Rudolph, he clearly saw the cause of her distress. Wishing to dissipate it, he said, with a smile, "I'll wager you are thinking of your poor rose-bush, and are crying because you could not bring it out walking with you?"

Goualeuse smiled at the pleasantry. By degrees the clouds of sadness left her fair young face; again she appeared absorbed in the pleasure of the moment, without giving a thought to the future. The vehicle by this time had arrived near Saint Denis, whose tall spire was visible in the distance.

"Oh, what a pretty steeple!" exclaimed Goualeuse.

"It is the bell-tower of the splendid church of Saint Denis: would you like to see it? We will stop the coach."

Goualeuse cast down her eyes. "From the hour I went to live with the Ogress I have never entered a church—I have not dared to do so. In the prison, on the contrary, I used to delight to join in singing the mass; and for Corpus Christi Day, we made such bouquets for the altar!"

"But God is good and merciful; why then fear to pray to Him, or to enter His holy house?"

"Oh! no, no, M. Rudolph, it would be impious. It is too much to have offended God in other ways."

After a moment's silence, Rudolph said to the girl, "Tell me, have you ever been in love?"

"Never, M. Rudolph."

"How is that?"

"You have seen the sort of persons who

frequent the wine-shop. To love, one must be virtuous——"

"Why so?"

"It is not in one's power to—one cannot—Oh, pray, M. Rudolph, let us talk no more of that!"

"Be it so, Fleur-de-Marie; we will change the subject. But why do you look so beseechingly at me? Those charming blue eyes are again filled with tears. Have I done aught to grieve you?"

"Oh, no, quite otherwise; 'tis the abundance of your goodness that makes me weep; and then you do not talk coarsely to me; indeed, one would think that you had brought me out solely for my own pleasure, so much do you seem gratified at seeing me happy. Not content with having so generously defended me yesterday, you have to-day procured for me happiness such as I never before enjoyed."

"Then you are indeed happy?"

"It will be long ere I forget the happiness of to-day?"

"Real happiness is, indeed, rare."

"Alas! it is indeed rare!"

"I'faith, to make up for what I have not, I often amuse myself with dreams of what I would have if I could, saying to myself, 'This is how I should like to live—this is the sort of fortune I should desire.' Have you, Fleur-de-Marie, never amused yourself with day-dreams, with building castles in the air?"

"Yes, when I was in prison, before I went to live with the Ogress, I used to do nothing all day but fancy pictures and sing; but I seldom do so now. And you, M. Rudolph, what is it you sigh for?"

"Oh, I should like to be rich—very rich, to have plenty of servants and carriages; a splendid house; to mix in the first circles of fashion, and go to the theatres every night. And you, Fleur-de-Marie?"

"I should not be so hard to please. If I had money enough to pay the Ogress, and a little to keep me till I could get work; then a pretty, clean room, from the window of which I could see the trees while I sat at my work."

"Plenty of flowers in your window?"

"Oh, certainly. If possible, to live in the country, and—and—that, I think, is all I should wish for.'

"A little room, and work enough to support you—those are necessaries; but, when one sets about wishing, a few superfluities may be permitted. Should you not like carriages, diamonds, and rich clothes?"

"I should not care about them. My liberty, a country life, and assurance that I should not die in a workhouse hospital—oh, above all, not to die *there!* Alas! M. Rudolph, that horrid thought often comes across me—it is terrible!"

"Alas! we poor people——"

"I do not dread the misery of dying there, but afterwards—when you are dead——"

"What then?"

"Have you never been told what they do with those who die there, M. Rudolph?"

"No."

"There was a young girl that I knew in prison—she died in an hospital. They gave her body to the surgeons," murmured the shuddering unfortunate.

"Oh! that is horrible! But come, my poor child, have you often these gloomy thoughts?"

"Yes; it surprises you, M. Rudolph, that I should feel shame as to what becomes of my body after death. Alas, my God! it is all they have left to me!"

These mournful and bitter words affected Rudolph deeply. Goualeuse, observing the deep dejection of her companion, said timidly: "Forgive me, M. Rudolph, I know I ought not to give utterance to such ideas, as you kindly brought me out to amuse me; in return for which I only keep talking about such very sad things—such very sad things! I cannot account for this; I do it despite myself. I feel happier to-day than I ever did before; yet the tears will come into my eyes every moment. You are not angry with me, are you, M. Rudolph? But see! this sadness will go as it came. There, now, 'tis gone. I will think of it no more. I will behave myself! Now, M. Rudolph, look at my eyes."

Fleur-de-Marie, after two or three times closing her eyes to get rid of a rebellious tear, opened them full upon Rudolph with a look of the most winning innocence.

"Fleur-de-Marie, I beg you to put no constraint upon yourself: be gay, if you wish it; sad if you feel downhearted. I confess to you that I too sometimes have my hours of melancholy; and I too should be very sorry to feign the joy I do not feel."

"What! are you also sometimes sad, M. Rudolph?"

"In sooth I am; my future prospect is scarcely brighter than your own. I have neither father or mother; what would become of me if I were to fall ill, and be unable to earn my daily bread, for I spend as I go?"

"That is wrong—very wrong, indeed, M. Rudolph," said the Goualeuse, in a tone of grave remonstrance that made him smile. "You should lay by something in the savings-bank. All my misfortunes have happened because I was not careful with my money. With a hundred francs beforehand, a workman is at no one's mercy, never embarrassed; oh! it is poverty that often seduces us to do wrong."

"All that is very true and very sensible, my good little housewife; but a hundred francs!—that is a large sum—how could a man like me save up a hundred francs?"

"Why, M. Rudolph, it is very simple, if you will but reckon a little. Let us see; I think you said you could often earn five francs a day?"

"Yes, when I work."

"Oh! but you should always work. What have you to complain of? Yours is such a

pretty trade—a fan-painter! It ought to be a pleasure to you to work. Really you are quite unreasonable, M. Rudolph," said Goualeuse, in a severe tone.

"Why, a workman may live well upon three francs a-day; and then there remains to you forty sous; at the end of a month you will have saved sixty francs—sixty francs in one month! What a sum!"

"Yes, but then it is so pleasant to be idle sometimes."

"Once more, M. Rudolph, I must tell you that you talk like a child."

"Well then, I will be reasonable, my little scolder, for you give me good advice. 'Tis strange I never thought of it before."

"Really!" exclaimed the girl, clapping her hands with joy. "Oh, how delighted I am to hear you say so! You will begin from to-day to lay by the forty sous seriously?"

"Yes, I will save forty sous a-day," said Rudolph, smiling in spite of himself.

"Are you quite, quite sure you will?"

"Yes, I give you my word for it."

"You will see how proud you will be with your first savings; and then that is not all—will you promise not to be angry?"

"Do I look unkind, Fleur-de-Marie?"

"Oh, no, indeed; but I don't know whether I ought——"

"You ought to tell me all you think, Fleur-de-Marie."

"Well, then, how is it that *you* who are so superior to your condition, for I can see that, frequent such low drinking-dens as that kept by the Ogress?"

"If I had not gone to the tap I should not have had the pleasure of going into the country with you to-day, Fleur-de-Marie."

"That is true, M Rudolph; but it does not answer the question. I am as happy as possible to-day, but I would gladly give up all thoughts of such happiness for the future, did I think it could in any way injure you."

"You've made it quite the other way by the excellent advice you have been giving me."

"But you will follow it?"

"I have promised you on my word of honour. I will save henceforth at least forty sous a-day."

At this moment Rudolph called out to the coachman, who had passed through the village of Sarcelles: "Take the first road to the right, go through Villiers-le-Bel; then turn to the left, and keep straight on."

"Now that you are satisfied with me, Fleur-de-Marie," said Rudolph, turning to his companion, "let us amuse ourselves in the pastime we spoke of just now, that of building castles in the air. That is not very expensive amusement, so you will not reproach me for extravagance."

"Oh, certainly not; go on; let me see how you build your castles."

"No, Fleur-de-Marie, you must build yours first."

"See if you could guess my taste, M. Rudolph."

"Let us try. Suppose that this road—I say *this* road, because we happen to be upon it——"

"Just so; this road will do as well as any other."

"Well, then, I will suppose that this road leads to a delightful village, far removed from the high road——"

"Oh, yes; that makes it so much more quiet."

"It is built on the side of a hill, and half-hidden by beautiful trees——"

"And close by it a gentle stream."

"Exactly!—a brook. At the end of this village stands a pretty farm, on one side of the house an orchard, on the other a lovely garden filled with flowers."

"That farm shall be called my farm, where we are going now."

"Just so."

"And where we could get milk!"

"Milk, did you say? Excellent cream, and newly laid eggs."

"Which we will get out of the nests ourselves."

"With our own hands."

"And then we would go and see the cows in the shed."

"To be sure we would."

"And look into the dairy?"

"Yes, the dairy!"

"And the pigeon-house?"

"Of course, the pigeon-house!"

"How delightful!"

"But let me finish the description of the farm."

"That's right!"

"On the ground-floor, a large kitchen for the farm-servants, and a dining-room for the mistress of the farm."

"Let the house have green Venetian blinds—they look so pretty, don't they, M. Rudolph?"

"Green Venetian blinds, allowed. I am quite of your opinion; nothing more cheerful than green blinds. Of course the mistress of this farm is your aunt."

"Naturally; and such a kind, good body."

"Excellent! and loves you like a mother."

"Dear aunt!" Oh, how delightful to have some one to love us!"

"And you will love her very much, in return."

"Oh!" cried Fleur-de-Marie, clasping her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven with an indescribable expression of happiness. "How I should love her! and then I should help her to work, sew, keep the linen in order, wash, preserve fruit for the winter; in short, I would do anything about the house. She should never have to complain of my idleness, I promise you. The first thing in the morning—"

"Stay, Fleur-de-Marie: how impatient you are! Let me finish my picture of the house"

"Ah, ah! Mr. Painter, you are in the practice of painting pretty landscapes on your fans, I see," said Goualeuse, laughing.

"Be quiet, little chatterbox, and let me finish my house."

"Very true; I do chatter, but then it is so amusing! Pray go on, M. Rudolph, I am listening; finish the farm-house."

"Your room is on the first-floor."

"My room! how delightful! let me see my room; let me see it!" The girl pressed more closely to Rudolph, opening her large blue eyes most curiously.

"Your chamber has two windows which look out upon the flower-garden, and a small meadow, watered by the rivulet. On the opposite bank of the watercourse rises an eminence, planted with old chestnut-trees, among which peeps the steeple of the village church."

"Oh, how beautiful, how very beautiful, M. Rudolph! It makes me wish to be there."

"Three or four fine cows are grazing in the meadow, which is only separated from the garden by a hawthorn hedge——"

"And from my windows I can see the cows."

"Quite plainly!"

"There is one shall be my favourite, shall it not, M. Rudolph? and I will make a pretty collar with a little bell to it, and teach it to come and feed out of my hand!"

"She will come at your call. She shall be milk-white, and young, her name shall be 'Moolie!'"

"Oh, what a pretty name! Poor Moolie! how I shall love her!"

"Let us finish your apartment, Fleur-de-Marie. It is hung with pretty chintz, with curtains to match. A large rose-tree, and a spreading honeysuckle covers the whole wall of the farm on that side, and so festoons your window, that every morning you have only to put out your hand to gather a fine nosegay all streaming with dew."

"Oh, M. Rudolph, what a pretty painter you are!"

"Now this is the way you will pass your day——"

"Oh, yes; describe my day's doings."

"Your good aunt wakes you at early morn with a tender kiss; she brings with her a bowl of new milk just warm, which she prays you to drink, because, poor child! you are delicate about the lungs. Then you will rise, and take a walk round the farm; look to Moolie, the poultry, your pets the pigeons, and the flowers in the garden. At nine o'clock your writing-master arrives——"

"*My* master!"

"Why you know that it will be necessary for you to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic, to be able to assist your aunt to keep her accounts of the farm produce."

"That is true, M. Rudolph: how forgetful I am! I will have to learn writing to assist my aunt," said the poor girl seriously; so thoroughly absorbed in the pleasing picture of this peaceful life, as to believe for the moment its reality.

"After your lesson, you will busy yourself with the linen of the house; or perhaps work a pretty little country-fashioned cap; towards two o'clock you will practice your writing; and then go with your aunt for a pretty walk; in summer to see the reapers; in autumn the tillage. This will pretty well tire you; so you will bring back a handful of wild herbs, selected for you by your dear Moolie."

"For we shall come home across the meadow, shall we not, M. Rudolph?"

"Of course you will; and just there, there is a wooden bridge across the river. By the time you reach home, bless me! why it's seven o'clock; and, as the evenings begin to be a little chill, a bright fire is blazing cheerily in the great kitchen: you go to it for a few minutes, to warm yourself, and to exchange a few words with the honest labourers who are at a hearty supper, after their day's toil. Then you sit down to dinner with your aunt; sometimes the clergyman, or a neighbouring farmer is invited to your table. After that you read or work, while your aunt makes up a friendly game at cards. At ten o'clock she kisses your forehead; you ascend to your chamber; and the next morning you wake to a similar day."

"Oh! one might lead such a life as that for a hundred years, M. Rudolph, and never know a moment's weariness."

"But that's not all. There are Sundays and holidays not yet spoken of."

"And how shall we pass those, M. Rudolph?"

"You will then make yourself smart. You will put on a pretty country-girl's dress, and add to it one of those charming round caps, which used to delight you so; you will accompany your aunt and James, the farm-servant, in her one-horse chaise, to hear high mass in the village-church; after which, during summer, you will not fail to be one with your aunt at all the different festivals in the adjoining parishes. You are so gentle, so modest, such a capital little housewife, and so tenderly beloved by your aunt, and the priest will give you such a favourable character, that all the young farmers of the neighbourhood will be anxious to secure you as a partner in the dance, because that is the way in which matches are made in the country. At length you will begin to remark one of these young men more than all the others; and—" Rudolph, surprised at his hearer's silence, looked at her. The unhappy girl was endeavouring, though fruitlessly, to stifle her sobs. Beguiled for a moment by the words of Rudolph, the bright future presented to her mental vision had effaced the horrible present; but too quickly did inexorable memory return, and by force of contrast, the horrid reality mingling with this sweet and smiling day-dream, showed with double horror her frightful position!

"Fleur-de-Marie! why is this?"

"Oh! M. Rudolph, you have unintentionally grieved me very much. Foolish girl that I was, I believed for a moment that this paradise was a reality."

"And so it is, my poor child! This paradise, as you call it, is no fiction. Stop, coachman! Now look! gaze around! where are we?"

The carriage stopped, Goualeuse raised her head mechanically. They were on the summit of a little hill. What was her surprise! her bewilderment! The pretty village, built half-way down the declivity; the farm, the meadow, the beautiful cows, the rivulet, the chestnut grove, the church in the distance! the picture, so vividly painted, was before her eyes! Nothing was wanting—even the milk-white heifer, Moolie, the future pet, was there. The rich colouring of an October sun gilded the charming landscape; and the foliage of the old chestnut-trees, yellowed and empurpled, stood out in bold relief against the clear blue sky.

"Well, Fleur-de-Marie, what do you say? am I a good painter?" said Rudolph, smiling.

Sweet-throat looked at him with a surprise mingled with disquiet; for all she saw and heard appeared to her beyond belief.

"Do I see rightly, or is it a dream? I fear lest it should pass away. I see all you have described——"

"And nothing is more real, my child. The good woman who owns this farm was my nurse; I was brought up here. I wrote to her early this morning, to say I was coming to see her. You see I painted from nature."

"Oh! true, M. Rudolph," said Goualeuse, with a deep sigh.

The farm to which Rudolph had brought Fleur-de-Marie was situated at the farther end of the village of Bouqueval—a small, solitary, and almost unknown hamlet, surrounded by its own lands, and about two leagues' distance from Ecouen. The vehicle, following Rudolph's directions, descended the steep, sloping road-hill, and entered a long avenue bordered with cherry and apple trees. The carriage rolled noiselessly over the short close turf with which the unfrequented roads of retired neighbourhoods are usually overgrown.

Fleur-de-Marie, whose utmost efforts were unavailing to shake off the painful sensations she experienced, remained so silent and mournful, that Rudolph reproached himself with having, by his well-intentioned surprise, been the cause of it. In a few minutes more, the carriage passed through the principal gate to the farm, and rolling on between rows of elms, stopped before a little rustic porch, half hidden by the luxuriant foliage of a vine blushing with the scarlet tints of autumn.

"Here we are, arrived at last, Fleur-de-Marie," said Rudolph: "does the farm please you?"

"Indeed it does, M. Rudolph. But I shall be ashamed to appear before the mistress of the farm. I cannot venture to look at her."

"Why not, my child?"

"After all you are right, M. Rudolph; she does not know how unworthy I am." Poor Fleur-de-Marie stifled a deep sigh.

The coach which brought Rudolph had doubtless been expected. The driver had scarcely opened the coach-door when a female of some fifty years of age, dressed in the style of affluent farmers' wives in the neighbourhood of Paris, with a countenance, though occasionally sad, exhibiting gentleness and benevolence, appeared beneath the porch, and with respectful eagerness advanced to meet Rudolph.

Goualeuse coloured deeply, and, after a moment's hesitation, descended from the vehicle.

"Good day, my good Mrs. George" said Rudolph, advancing towards the female; "you see I am punctual." Then, turning to the coachman, and placing some money in his hand, he said, "You may return to Paris."

The coachman, a short, thick-set man, with his hat down over his eyes, and his countenance almost entirely concealed by the thick fur collar of his top coat, pocketed the money without a word, remounted his seat, gave his horses the whip, and quickly disappeared down the green avenue.

Fleur-de-Marie drew close to Rudolph, and with an air of trouble and uneasiness, almost amounting to alarm, said, in a tone so low as not to be overheard by Mrs. George, "Oh, M. Rudolph, you have sent back the coach!"

"Of course I have."

"But the Ogress?"

"Why mention her?"

"Alas; I must return to her this evening; I must indeed; or she will look upon me as a thief. The clothes I have on are hers, and I owe her——"

"Be composed, my child. It is I that should ask your forgiveness, not you mine."

"My forgiveness! for what?"

"For not having sooner told you that you owe nothing to the Ogress; that if you wish, you may remain here, and cast off the garments you now wear, for others which my kind friend Mrs. George will furnish you with. She is pretty nearly of your height, and will gladly lend you everything you require. You see, she is already beginning to play the character of your aunt."

Fleur-de-Marie thought she yet dreamed; she stared first at the mistress of the farm, and then at Rudolph, unable to credit the reality of what she saw and heard.

"What!" she cried, in a voice broken by emotion. "Not go back to Paris? I can remain here! Will this lady permit me? Oh! it cannot be! the castle in the air you were just now building was——"

"The picture of this reality!"

"No, no; that would be too beautiful! too much happiness!"

"Nay, Fleur-de-Marie, we never have too much happiness."

"Oh, for mercy's sake, M. Rudolph, do not deceive me; it would make my heart so ache!"

"My child, listen to me," said Rudolph, with a tone and manner which, although still affectionate, was mingled with a dignity of manner Fleur-de-Marie had not previously remarked in him. "I repeat that, if you please, you may from this very hour lead here, with Mrs. George, that peaceful life, whose description but a short time since so much delighted you. Although Mrs. George is not your aunt, she will feel for you the tenderest regard; with the people about the farm you will pass as being her niece, and this innocent deception will render your position more agreeable. Again, I repeat to you, Fleur-de-Marie, you may now at your own pleasure realize the dream of our journey. As soon as you have donned your village attire," said Rudolph, smilingly, "we will take you to see your future favourite, the milk-white heifer, Moolie, who only awaits the pretty collar you have promised her. Then we will go and make acquaintance with your pets, the pigeons, visit the dairy, and so on, till we have been all over the farm. For I mean to keep my promise in every respect."

Fleur-de-Marie pressed her hands together with earnest gratitude. Surprise, joy, gratitude, and respect were painted on her beautiful countenance, while, with eyes streaming with tears, she exclaimed, "M. Rudolph, you must be one of those blessed angels sent by a merciful God to do good to those even who know Him not, and rescue poor fallen creatures from shame and misery."

"My poor girl," replied Rudolph, with a smile of deep sadness and ineffable kindness, "though still young, I am acquainted with sorrow. I lost a dear child, who, if living, would be of your own age. Let that explain my deep sympathy with all who suffer, and for yourself particularly, Fleur-de-Marie—or rather Marie only. Now, go with Mrs. George. Yes, Marie; henceforward, let that name, simple and sweet as yourself, be your only appellation. Before my departure we will have some talk together, and then I shall quit you, happy in the knowledge that you are happy yourself."

Fleur-de-Marie replied not, half-bent her knee, seized the hand of Rudolph, and before he could prevent her, respectfully raised it to her lips with an air of modest submission: she then followed Mrs. George, who surveyed her with deep interest.

CHAPTER XI.

MURPHY AND RUDOLPH.

RUDOLPH directed his steps towards the farm-yard, and found the tall man awaiting him, who, disguised as a charcoal-seller, had warned him the preceding evening of the approach of Sarah and her brother. Murphy—that was the name of this person—was about fifty years of age. Some silvery locks were mingled with the two scanty tufts of light brown hair which remained on his nearly bald head; his broad, open, and ruddy face was clean shaven, except very short whiskers, of a reddish colour, reaching no lower than the tips of the ears, from which they diverged, stretching themselves in a gentle curve across his full cheeks. Despite his years and inclination to corpulence, Murphy was robust and active; and his countenance, though phlegmatic, was expressive of benevolence and resolution. He was attired in a white neckerchief, a long waistcoat, and a long black coat, with very wide skirts; his breeches, of an olive-green colour, were of the same material as the gaiters which encased his sturdy legs, but did not reach to the knee. His dress and manly appearance accorded with the idea of what in England is styled a "gentleman farmer." We must add that the person we are describing was an English knight, and not a farmer. At the moment of Rudolph's entrance into the farm-yard, Murphy was in the act of putting into the boot of a travelling carriage a pair of small pistols, which he had just been very carefully cleaning.

"What the devil do you want with your pistols?" inquired Rudolph.

"That is my business, your highness," replied Murphy, descending the carriage step; "mind your own affairs, and I will attend to mine."

"At what hour have you ordered the horses?"

"According to your directions—at nightfall."

"You came here this morning?"

"At eight o'clock. Mrs. George has had full time to get everything in readiness."

"You are in an ill-humour; is it with me?"

"Cannot your highness accomplish the task you have imposed upon yourself, without incurring so much personal danger?"

"Surely, in order to lull suspicion in the minds of the persons I seek to understand, appreciate, and try, it is necessary that I should adopt their garb, customs, and their language."

"But in spite of all this, last night, in that abominable street of the City, where we went to unkennel Red Arm, in hope of obtaining from him some particulars relative to that unhappy son of Mrs. George, the fear of irritating or disobeying your highness scarcely served to hinder me from rushing to your assistance, in your scuffle with the rascal you encountered up that cut-throat court."

"I suppose, then, Murphy, you either doubt my strength or my courage."

"Unfortunately, you have given me a hundred causes to have no doubt about one or the other. Thank Providence, Flattman, the Bertrand of Germany, perfected you in

the knowledge of fencing; Tom Cribb showed you how hands can keep the head; Lacour, of Paris, rendered you A 1 in single-stick, wrestling, and *slang*, so as to turn you out fully provided for your venturesome excursions. You are bold, have muscles of steel, and, though slight and graceful, I should have no more chance with you than a dray-horse against a racer; that's certain."

"Then, what are you afraid of?"

"Why, I maintain that it is not proper that your highness should try a fall with the first blackguard you meet. I do not say that, because of the inconvenience it is to a gentleman with whom I am intimate to blacken his face with charcoal, and make himself look like a broiled bone. Despite my age, my corpulence, and my gravity, I would disguise myself as a rope-dancer, if, by so doing, I could serve you. But I stick to what I said just before."

"Oh! I know all that, my old friend; but when once an idea does get into your thick skull—when an attachment once roots itself in your firm and courageous heart—Old Scratch himself, both with tooth and nail, would stand no chance to tear them out."

"You flatter me. I suspect your highness is meditating some——"

"Oh, don't mince the matter——"

"New folly, your highness."

"My poor Murphy, you have chosen a very unseasonable time for lecturing me."

"Why?"

"I am in one of my moments of pride and happiness. I am here."

"In a place where you have done much good. I know it. The 'Model Farm,' which you have established, to instruct, to encourage, and to reward the honest labourers, has been of immense service to this part of the country. Ordinary men think but of improving the breed of cattle; you occupy yourself in bettering the condition of your fellow-men. This is admirable! You placed Mrs. George at the head of this establishment; no one better. Noble-spirited woman! an angel of virtue. I am rarely moved, but the thought of her misfortunes has brought tears to my eyes. But your highness's new favourite; well, we will not say much of her."

"Why not, Murphy?"

"Your highness will do as he pleases."

"I will do what is right," said Rudolph, with a touch of impatience.

"What is right, the way you look at it."

"What is right before God and my own conscience," replied Rudolph, in a stern tone.

"Well, on this we cannot agree; therefore let us speak no more about it."

"I command you to speak about it!" cried Rudolph, imperiously.

"I have never given your royal highness cause to bid me hold my tongue. I hope I shall not now be ordered to speak," replied Murphy, steadily.

"Sir Walter!" cried Rudolph, in a tone of increasing irritation.

"Your highness!"

"You know, sir, how much I dislike concealment."

"Your royal highness will excuse me, but it suits me to have certain concealments," said Murphy, bluntly.

"If I descend with familiarity with you, it is on condition, sir, that you rise with frankness towards me."

It is impossible to describe the sovereign lordliness which marked the countenance of Rudolph, as he pronounced these last words.

"I am fifty years of age, I am a gentleman, and your royal highness should not address me thus."

"Be silent!"

"Your highness!"

"Silence, I say!"

"Your royal highness does wrong in forcing a man of honour and feeling to remind you of the services he has rendered you," said the knight, coolly.

"Services! have I not repaid them in every way?"

It should be stated that Rudolph did not attach to these bitter words a humiliating sense, placing Murphy in the light of a mere mercenary; but such, unfortunately, was the interpretation the latter put upon them. Purple with shame, he lifted his clenched hands to his forehead with an expression of pain and indignation; then, as if by a sudden revulsion of feeling, casting his eyes on Rudolph, whose noble countenance was convulsed by the violence of extreme disdain, Murphy, in a faltering voice, and stifling a sigh of the tenderest commiseration, said, "Your royal highness should recover yourself; you are not to be reasoned with."

These words increased Rudolph's irritation to the highest pitch: his look had a savage glare in it: his lips grew pale, and, advancing towards Murphy with a threatening gesture, he exclaimed, "How dare you?"

Murphy retreated a step, and said, sharply, as if in spite of himself, "Your highness, REMEMBER THE THIRTEENTH OF JANUARY!"

These words produced an extraordinary effect on Rudolph. His countenance, contracted by anger, expanded. He looked steadfastly at Murphy, bowed his head, and then, after a moment's silence, murmured, in faltering accents: "Oh! sir, now you are cruel. I had thought that my repentance—my remorse—and yet it is you—you——"

Rudolph could not conclude, his voice died away as he threw himself on a stone bench, and buried his face in his hands.

"Your highness," said Murphy, with bitter grief, "forgive me! Forgive your old and faithful Murphy. It was not till driven to an extremity, and fearing the consequences of your passion, alas! not for myself, but for you, that I so spoke. I said it without anger, without meaning reproach, in spite of

myself, in pity. I was wrong to be so sensitive, your highness. Oh! who can know your character, if not I, who have never quitted you from your infancy! For mercy's sake, say that you forgive me for having called to your memory that fatal day. Alas! what expiations have you not made——"

Rudolph raised his head; he was very pale, and said to his companion, in a gentle and melancholy voice, "Enough, enough, my old friend; I thank you for having checked this fatal transport. I make no apologies to you for the harsh things I have said: you know, 'it is a long way from the heart to the lips,' as good folks at home say. I was wrong; let us speak no more of it."

"Alas! now you will be melancholy for a long time, as if I were not sufficiently unhappy! I wish nothing so much as to raise your saddened spirits, yet I depress you by my silly susceptibility. Zounds! what is the use of honesty and grey hairs if not to endure even an unmerited reproach?"

"Let it rest; we were both in the wrong, my good old friend," said Rudolph, mildly; "let us forget it, and return to our former conversation. You fully approved of my establishment of this farm, and the deep interest I have taken in Mrs. George. You will allow, will you not, that she had merited it by her excellent qualities, her misfortunes, even if she did not belong to the family of Harville—a family to which my father had vowed eternal gratitude."

"I have always approved of the good feeling entertained for Mrs. George by your highness."

"But you are astonished at my interest for this poor lost girl, are you not?"

"Your highness, have mercy; I was wrong, I was wrong!"

"No; I can easily understand how appearances may have deceived you. Nevertheless, as you know my life—*all* my life, and as you second me always with as much fidelity as courage, in my self-imposed expiation, it is part of my duty, or, if you like the phrase better, my gratitude, to show you that I do not act thoughtlessly."

"I am fully aware of that."

"You know my ideas on the subject of the good which a man ought to do who unites *knowledge*, *will*, and *power*. To succour those unfortunate beings who solicit you is well; to seek out those who uncomplainingly struggle against adversity with energy and honour, and to assist them—sometimes without their knowledge—to prevent, in time, misery and temptation to crime, is better; to reinstate in self-respect—to send back to honesty those who have preserved some generous and ennobling sentiments in the midst of the contempt that withers them, the misery that eats into them, and the corruption that encircles them, and for the sake of doing this, to brave in person contact with this misery, this corruption, the infection of this moral poison—this, this is best of all! To pursue, with untiring hatred, with implacable vengeance, vice, infamy, and crime, whether grovelling in mud, or enthroned on velvet, is justice; but inconsiderately to give help to merited degradation, to prostitute charity and commiseration by bestowing one's wealth and sympathy on base and unworthy wretches, is horrible, impious, sacrilegious! Such persons act as if they doubted the existence of a God; and he who thus acts lends countenance to such a creed."

"I did not mean to assert that your highness has bestowed your benefits unworthily."

"One word more, my old friend. You know that the child whose death I daily lament—that daughter whom I should have loved the more, because Sarah, her unfeeling mother, had shown herself so totally indifferent about her—would now have been sixteen years old, like this unfortunate creature. You know, besides, that I cannot prevent the deep and painful sympathy I feel for girls of that age."

"That is true; I ought so to have interpreted the interest your highness takes in his favourite. Besides, to succour the unfortunate is to honour God."

"Yes, my friend; when the objects are deserving; and there is nothing more worthy of compassion and respect than a woman like Mrs. George, who reared by a good and pious mother, in the strict observance of all her duties, has never failed—never! and has borne herself courageously through the severest trials. But is it not also honouring God in His divinest forms, when we can raise from the mire one of those beings whom He has been pleased to endow so richly? Does not she also deserve compassion and respect—yes, respect—who, unhappy girl, abandoned to her own instinct—tortured, imprisoned, debased, sullied, has piously guarded in the depths of her young heart those noble germs first implanted by her Creator? Had you but witnessed how, at the first word of interest expressed for her—the first friendly and virtuous speech that had ever been addressed to her—the most charming instincts, the purest tastes, the most refined thoughts, the most poetic ideas, developed themselves abundantly in her ingenuous mind, even as in the early spring, a thousand wild flowers lift up their heads to the sun's first ray. In one hour's conversation with Fleur-de-Marie, I discovered in her treasures of goodness, worth, prudence—yes, prudence, my old friend. A smile came to my lip, and a tear to my eye, when, in her simple tattle, rich in wisdom, she proved to me that I ought to save forty sous a-day, that I might be beyond want and evil temptations. Poor little one! she said all this with an air so serious and persuasive; she evinced so much delight in giving me good advice; so sweet a joy in hearing me promise to follow it, that I was moved—yes, moved even to tears. But you yourself are affected, old friend."

"Yes; that trait of persuading your highness to lay by forty sous a-day—thinking you a workman—instead of urging you to extravagance towards herself, indeed touches me."

"Hush! here comes Mrs. George and Marie. Get everything ready for our departure; we must be in Paris early."

Thanks to Mrs. George's care, Fleur-de-Marie could hardly have been known again. A pretty peasant's cap, and two thick braids of light brown hair, encircled her maidenly face. An ample kerchief of white muslin crossed her bosom, and half disappeared under the high fold of a small shot taffeta apron, the blue and red shades of which appeared to advantage over a dark nun-like gown, which seemed to have been made for her. Her countenance was collected and thoughtful. Certain joyous feelings produce in the mind an unspeakable sadness—a holy melancholy. Rudolph was not surprised at the gravity of Fleur-de-Marie; he had expected it. Had she been joyful and talkative, he would have had a less elevated opinion of her.

In the serious and resigned features of Mrs. George might be traced the marks of long-suffering. She looked on Fleur-de-Marie with a tenderness and compassion almost maternal; for the grace and sweetness of the girl were indeed affecting.

"Here is *my child*, who has come to thank you for your goodness, M. Rudolph," said Mrs. George, presenting Goualeuse to Rudolph.

At the words *my child*, Goualeuse slowly turned her large eyes towards the speaker, and regarded her for some moments with a look of unutterable gratitude.

"Thanks for Marie, my dear Mrs. George, she is worthy of this tender interest, and will always deserve it."

"M. Rudolph," said Goualeuse, with a failing voice, "you can feel—do you not feel, how it is that I cannot find anything to say to you?"

"Your emotion tells me all, my child——"

"Oh! she feels deeply that the good which comes to her is from above," said Mrs. George, with much feeling; "her first impulse on entering my room was to throw herself on her knees before my crucifix."

"Because now, thanks to you, M. Rudolph, I dare to pray," said Goualeuse.

Murphy turned hastily away; his pretensions to firmness would not allow him to betray how much he had been touched by the simple words.

Rudolph said to her: "My child, I wish to converse with Mrs. George. My friend Murphy will conduct you over the farm, and introduce you to the acquaintance of your future pets; we will rejoin you presently. Hallo! Murphy! Murphy! you do not hear me?"

The worthy gentleman turned his back, and pretended to blow his nose vehemently—making a formidable noise, replaced his handkerchief in his pocket, pulled his hat over his eyes, and, turning half round, offered his arm to Marie. Murphy had managed so skilfully that neither Rudolph nor Mrs. George could see his face. Taking the arm of the timid girl, he walked away with her towards the farm-buildings, with such rapid strides, that, to keep up with him, Goualeuse was obliged to run, as in the days of her infancy she ran beside the Screech-Owl.

"Well, Mrs. George, what do you think of Marie?" asked Rudolph.

"M. Rudolph, I have already told you: she had scarcely entered my room, when, seeing the crucifix, she hastened to kneel before it. It is impossible for me to describe to you the spontaneous and naturally religious feeling that was evidenced in this movement. I saw in an instant that her soul was not degraded. Then, M. Rudolph, the expression of her gratitude to you had nothing exaggerated in it; nothing loud; yet it is not the less sincere. One word more, to show you how powerful in her is this religious instinct. I said, 'You must have been much astonished, and very happy, when M. Rudolph told you that you were to remain here for the future? What a deep effect that must have produced upon you!' 'Oh! yes,' replied she; 'when M. Rudolph said that, I cannot describe what passed within me; but I felt that kind of pious joy which I have experienced on entering a church. When I could go there,' she added, 'for you know, Madame——'. Seeing her countenance covered with shame, I did not allow her to finish what she was going to say, but said to her: 'I know, my child, for I shall always call you my child, I know that you have suffered much; but God blesses those who love and fear Him; those who have been unfortunate, and those who repent."

"Then, my good Mrs. George, I am doubly happy at what I have done. This poor girl will interest you; you have judged her rightly; her disposition is excellent."

"What still further affected me, M. Rudolph, is that she has not permitted a single question to escape her about you, although her curiosity must be so much excited. Struck with a reserve so full of delicacy, I wished to ascertain whether she was conscious of this merit, and said to her: 'You must be very curious to know who your mysterious benefactor is?' 'Know him!' she replied, with a charming simplicity: 'I do know him—he is my benefactor.'"

"Then you will love her? Excellent woman: she will find at least a little corner in your heart?"

"Yes, I shall devote my time to her as I should be giving it to—*him*," said Mrs. George, in a voice broken with emotion.

Rudolph took her hand.

"Come, come, do not be again discouraged. If our search has been unsuccessful hitherto, yet one day, perhaps——"

Mrs. George shook her head, and said

bitterly: "My poor son would be now twenty years old!"

"Say, he *is* that age——"

"God hear you, and grant it, M. Rudolph."

"He will hear me, I fully believe. Yesterday I went (but in vain) in search of a certain fellow called Red Arm, from whom I had believed I might, perhaps, have obtained some information about your son. Coming from the house of this Red Arm, in consequence of an affray, I met with this unfortunate child——"

"Alas! at least your kind endeavour in my behalf threw you in the way of succouring another unfortunate, M. Rudolph."

"You have received no news from Rochefort?"

"None," said Mrs. George, in a low voice, and shuddering.

"So much the better! There is no longer any doubt that the monster perished in the mud-shoals in his attempt to escape from the gal——"

Rudolph hesitated to pronounce the loathsome word.

"From the *galleys!* Oh, say it!—the *galleys!*" cried the wretched woman with horror, and a choking voice: "The father of my boy! Oh! if that unhappy child still lives—if he has not, like me, changed his name—oh, shame! what shame! Yet that is not the worst, his father, perhaps, has carried out his horrible threat. What has he done with my boy? Why did he tear him from me?"

"That mystery I cannot penetrate," said Rudolph, with a pensive air. "What good could it do the wretch to carry off your son fifteen years ago, when, as you told me, he was trying to escape into a foreign land? A child of that age could only hamper his flight."

"Alas, M. Rudolph! when my *husband*," (the unhappy woman shuddered as she pronounced the word), "arrested on the frontier, was brought back to Paris, and thrown into prison, where I was permitted to visit him, he said to me these horrible words: 'I took away your child because you love him, and because it will be a means of compelling you to send me money, which may or may not benefit him—but that's my concern. Whether he lives or dies is not your affair; but if he lives he will be in good hands: you shall drink as deeply of the shame of the son as you have of the infamy of the father!' Alas! a month afterwards my husband was condemned to penal servitude for life; since then, entreaties, prayers, letters, all have been in vain: I have never been able to learn the fate of my child. Oh, M. Rudolph, where is my son at this moment? These frightful words are continually sounding in my ears: 'You shall drink as deep of the shame of the son as you have of the infamy of the father!'"

"But that is most inconceivable atrocity: why should he ruin, why corrupt the unhappy child? and, above all, why carry him off?"

"I have told you, M. Rudolph—in order to force me to send him money; although he had ruined me, I had still a few resources, which at length were also exhausted. Notwithstanding his wickedness, I could not but believe that he would employ, at least, a portion of this money in bringing up this unhappy child."

"And your son had no sign, no mark, by which he could be recognized?"

"No other than that of which I have spoken to you, M. Rudolph—a small holy-dove (*St. Esprit*), cut in lapis lazuli, attached to his neck by a chain of silver: a sacred relic, blessed by the Pope."

"Come, come, courage. The Lord is almighty."

"Providence placed me in your path, M. Rudolph."

"Too late, my good Mrs. George; too late. I might, perhaps, have saved you many years of sorrow."

"Oh! M. Rudolph, you have overwhelmed me with kindness."

"In what way? I bought this farm. When prosperous you preferred superintending your own property; you have consented to become my manager; and here, thanks to your care, intelligence, and activity, this establishment produces me——"

"Produces you, my lord?" said Mrs. George, interrupting Rudolph: "why, nearly all the returns are employed in ameliorating the condition of the labourers, who look upon their occupation on this model farm as a great favour; and, moreover, to assist numerous unfortunates in the district, through the mediation of our good Abbe Laporte——"

"Oh, the good Abbe is well thought of!" said Rudolph, wishing to escape the praises; "have you had the kindness to inform him of my arrival? I wish to recommend my new favourite to his notice. He has received my letter?"

"M. Murphy gave it to him on his arrival this morning."

"In that letter I briefly related to our good clergyman the history of this poor child. I was not certain that I should be able to come to-day myself; in that case, Murphy would have brought Marie——"

A farm-labourer interrupted this conversation, which was held in the garden.

"Madame, the parson is waiting for you."

"Are the post-horses arrived, my lad?" inquired Rudolph.

"Yes, M. Rudolph; they are being put to." The man left the garden.

Mrs. George, the clergyman, and the inhabitants of the farm, knew the protector of Fleur-de-Marie only as M. Rudolph. Murphy's trustworthiness was unimpeachable; and although when in private he was very punctilious in be-titling Rudolph, yet before strangers he was very careful not to address him in any other way than as *M. Rudolph*.

"I forgot to forewarn you, my dear Mrs.

George," said Rudolph, as they returned to the house, "that Marie has, I fear, very weak lungs—privations and misery have tried her health. This morning early I was struck with the paleness of her countenance, although her cheeks were deeply flushed; her eyes, too, seem to me to have a brilliancy which betokens a tendency to fever. She will require great care."

"Rely on me, M. Rudolph; but, thank heaven, there is nothing serious to apprehend. At her age, in the country, with pure air, repose, and happiness, she will soon recover."

"I think so; nevertheless, I will not trust to your country doctors. I will tell Murphy to bring here my medical man—a negro—a very skilful practitioner, who will point out to you the best regimen to follow. You must frequently send me news of Marie. In a little time, when she is better and more settled, we will talk as to her future life; perhaps it would be best that she always remained with you, if you should approve of it."

"That would be my wish, M. Rudolph; she would supply the place of the child whose loss I daily deplore."

"Let us hope for you and for her."

When Rudolph and Mrs. George approached the farm, Murphy and Marie came up to them. The worthy gentleman let go the arm of Goualeuse, and said to Rudolph in a whisper, with an air of some confusion: "This little girl has bewitched me; I really do not know which interests me most, she or Mrs. George. I was a savage."

"I knew that you would render justice to her, old Murphy," said Rudolph, smiling, and squeezing the Englishman's hand.

Mrs. George, leaning on Marie's arm, entered with her a small room on the ground-floor, where Abbe Laporte was waiting. Murphy went to make preparations for their departure. Mrs. George, Marie, Rudolph, and the priest, remained together.

Simple, but very comfortable, this small apartment was hung with bluish-grey chintz, like the rest of the house, as had been faithfully described by Rudolph to Goualeuse. A thick carpet covered the floor, a good fire blazed in the grate, and two large nosegays of China asters placed in white glass vases, shed a light, agreeable odour through the place. From the windows through the half-opened Venetian blinds, the meadow, the little river, and, beyond it, the hill-side, planted with chestnut-trees, were visible.

Abbe Laporte, who sat near the fire-place, was upwards of eighty years old, and had, ever since the last days of the Revolution, done duty in this small parish. Nothing could be more venerable than his aged, attenuated, and somewhat melancholy countenance, shaded by long white hair, which fell on the collar of his black cassock, patched in more places than one; the Abbe preferring, as he said, to clothe one or two poor children in good warm broad-cloth, than to play the ladies' pastor; that is, wear his cassocks less than two or three years. The good Abbe was so old, so very old, that his hands continually trembled;—and as he occasionally lifted them up, when speaking, you would have thought that he was bestowing a benediction.

"M. Abbe," said Rudolph, respectfully, "Mrs. George has undertaken the charge of this young girl, for whom I also solicit your kindness."

"It is her right, sir, like all who come to us. The mercy of God is inexhaustible, my dear child; He has proved it in not abandoning you in most painful trials—I know all." He took the hand of Marie in his own venerable and trembling palms. "The generous man who has rescued you has realized the words of Scripture: 'The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.' Now deserve his mercies by your conduct, and in me you shall always find one ready to encourage and sustain you in the good path on which you have entered. You will have in Mrs. George a daily example, in me a watchful adviser. The Lord will finish his work."

"And I will pray for those who have had pity on me, and have led me to Him, father," said Goualeuse, throwing herself on her knees before the priest. Emotion overpowered her, and she was stifled by sobs. Mrs. George, Rudolph, and the Abbe were all deeply affected.

"Rise, my dear child," said the clergyman, "you will soon merit absolution from those grave faults of which you have been the victim rather than the criminal; for in the words of the prophet again: 'For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord.'"

Murphy, at this moment, opened the door of the room.

"M. Rudolph," said he, "the horses are ready."

"Adieu, father! adieu, my good Mrs. George! I commend your child—*our* child I should rather say, to your care. Let us go! farewell, Marie; I will see you soon again."

The venerable pastor, leaning on the arm of Mrs. George and Goualeuse, who supported his tottering steps, left the room to witness the departure of Rudolph.

The last rays of the sun shed their bright tints on this sad and interesting group:—

An old priest, the personification of everlasting charity, pardon, and hope: a woman overwhelmed by every grief that can distress a wife and mother; a girl, hardly out of her infancy, and but recently plunged into an abyss of vice, through poverty and the infamous tyranny of crime.

Rudolph got into the carriage, Murphy took his place by his side, and the horses started at a gallop.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

THE day after he had entrusted Goualeuse to the care of Mrs. George, Rudolph, still attired as a workman, at noon precisely, stood at the door of the Flower Basket public-house, situate near the barrier of Bercy.

On the previous evening, at ten o'clock, the Slasher had been punctual to the appointment which he had made with Rudolph. The sequel of this narrative will inform our readers of the result of this meeting. It was noon, and the rain fell in torrents; the Seine, swollen by incessant falls, had risen very high, and inundated a portion of the quay. Rudolph looked impatiently from time to time towards the barrier: at length he observed a man and woman who were advancing in the distance, under shelter of an umbrella, whom he recognized as the Owl and the Schoolmaster.

These two persons were completely metamorphosed: the ruffian had cast off his squalid dress, and his air of brutal ferocity. He wore a long frock-coat of green cloth, and a round hat; whilst his neckerchief and shirt were of snowy whiteness. Had it not been for the hideousness of his features and the fierce glare of his eyes, always restless and inflamed, this fellow, by his peaceable and steady gait, might have been taken for an honest citizen.

The one-eyed woman, also dressed in her holiday clothes, wore a large imitation Cashmere shawl of mixed wool and silk, and carried in her hand a capacious basket.

The rain having ceased for a moment, Rudolph, overcoming a sensation of disgust, went to meet the frightful couple. For the slang of the boozing-ken the Schoolmaster now substituted a language almost polished, indicating a cultivated mind, and contrasting strangely with his sanguinary braggadocio. When Rudolph approached, the brigand made him a low bow; the Screech-Owl curtsied respectfully.

"Sir, your humble servant," said the Schoolmaster: "my best respects to you—I am delighted to make, or, rather, to renew our acquaintance; for the night before last you favoured me with two blows of the fist which were enough to settle a rhinoceros. But not a word of that now; it was a joke on your part, I am sure—a mere jest. Let us think no more about it, for serious business brings us now together. At eleven o'clock yesterday I saw the Slasher at Mother Ponisse's, and appointed to meet him here this morning, in case he chose to be our associate; but it seems that he most decidedly refuses."

"You accept, then?"

"Your name, sir, if you please?"

"Rudolph."

"M. Rudolph, we will go into the Flower Basket—neither myself nor the lady has breakfasted. We will talk over our little affairs while breaking a crust."

"Willingly."

"We can talk as we walk along. You and the Slasher, without meaning to say anything harsh, certainly owe some recompense to my woman and myself—you have caused us the loss of more than two thousand francs. The Owl had an appointment near Saint Ouen with the tall gentleman in black, who came to ask for you the other evening at the wine-shop. He offered two thousand francs to do something to you. The Slasher has explained all about that. But now I come to think of it, Finetta," said the ruffian, "go and select a room at the Basket, and order breakfast—some cutlets, a bit of veal, salad, and a couple of bottles of first quality Beaune; we'll join you there."

The Owl, who had not taken her eye off Rudolph for an instant, left them, after exchanging a look with the Schoolmaster:—

"As I observed, M. Rudolph," said the latter, "the Slasher has edified me as to the proposition about the two thousand francs."

"What do you mean by *edified* you?"

"You are right—the language is a little too high-flown for you. I would say, that the Slasher nearly told me all that the tall gentleman in mourning, with his two thousand francs, wanted with you."

"Well, well?"

"Not so very well, young man; for the Slasher, having yesterday morning met the Owl, near Saint Ouen, never left her a foot from the moment he saw the tall gentleman in mourning come up, so that he did not venture to approach her. Therefore you should put us in the way of regaining our two thousand francs."

"Nothing is more easy; but let us come back to our subject. I had proposed a glorious job to the Slasher, which he at first accepted, but afterwards threw up."

"He always had shaky ideas."

"But while he refused, he observed me that——"

"He observed *to* you, that——"

"The devil! you ride the high horse with your grammar."

"As a schoolmaster, it is my business."

"He gave me to understand that if he did not like to eat *treacle* on his *panem* (blood on his bread), that was no reason others should not relish it, and that you, perhaps, would lend me a hand?"

"And may I, without rudeness, inquire why you appointed a meeting with the Slasher, yesterday morning at Saint Ouen, which procured him the advantage of a meeting with the Owl? The Slasher was too much puzzled to give me a clear answer on that point."

Rudolph imperceptibly bit his lips, and replied, shrugging his shoulders—

"I can easily suppose that; for I only told him part of my plan, you see, not knowing whether he had made up his mind."

"That was the prudent course."

"Doubly so, as I had two strings to my bow."

"You are a cautious man. You appointed to meet the Slasher, then, at Saint Ouen, for——"

Rudolph, after a moment's hesitation, had the good fortune to hit upon a story which would plausibly account for the Slasher's want of skill, and replied—

"Look here! The crack I'm bent on is a first chop one, because the master of the house in question is in the country; all my fear was lest he should return to Paris. To be sure upon that point I went to Pierrefitte, where his country residence is situated, and there I learned that he would not be back again until the day after to-morrow."

"Very well. But I want an answer to my question: Why did you ask Slasher to meet you at Saint Ouen?"

"Allow me to say, you are not very bright. How far is it from Pierrefitte to Saint Ouen?"

"About a league."

"And from Saint Ouen to Paris?"

"About the same distance."

"Well, if I had found nobody at Pierrefitte—that is, if the house had been deserted—I might have done good business there: not so rich as in Paris, but still very tidy. I went back to Saint Ouen after the Slasher, who there awaited me. We should have then returned to Pierrefitte by a cross-road, with which I am familiar, and——"

"I understand. If, on the other hand, the job was to be done in Paris——"

"We should gain the Barrier de l'Etoile by the La Revolte Road, thence to the Allee des Veuves——"

"Is but a step: it is clear enough. At Saint Ouen you were well placed for either operation—that was nicely cut out. Now I can understand why the Slasher was at Saint Ouen. We may conclude then that the house in the Allee des Veuves will be uninhabited until the day after to-morrow?"

"Uninhabited—except by the porter."

"Of course. Is it a profitable job!"

"Sixty thousand francs in gold in the proprietor's study."

"Are you acquainted with the premises?"

"As well as my own fob."

"Silence—here we are—not a word before the uninitiated vulgar. I do not know if you feel as I do, but the morning air has sharpened me like a meat-saw."

The Owl awaited them at the threshold of the public-house.

"This way," said she, "this way. I have ordered our breakfast."

Rudolph wished the brigand to pass on first, for reasons of his own; but the Schoolmaster so strenuously insisted on etiquette, that Rudolph entered before him. Before he sat down to table, the Schoolmaster tapped lightly against the panels of the partition, that he might ascertain their thickness, and power of transmitting sounds.

"We need not be afraid to speak out," said he; "the wainscot is not thin. We shall be served shortly, and, after that, not be disturbed in our chat."

A servant brought the breakfast. Before he shut the door, Rudolph saw the charcoal-man, Murphy, gravely seated at a table in an adjoining room.

The apartment wherein the scene we are describing took place was long, narrow, and lighted by a window which looked into the street, and was opposite to the door. The Screech-Owl turned her back to this window; the Schoolmaster was one side of the table, and Rudolph on the other."

The servant having left the room, the ruffian rose, took his plate, and seated himself beside Rudolph, so as to be between him and the door.

"We can converse better," he said, "and besides, we need not talk so loud."

"And popping yourself down 'tween me and the door, you fancy you can prevent me from going out," replied Rudolph, coolly.

The Schoolmaster nodded assent; then half drawing from the pocket of his coat a stiletto, round, and somewhat thicker than a goose-quill, fitted into a wooden handle, which disappeared in the grasp of his hairy fingers, said, "You see that?"

"Big enough!"

"If this meets the eye—" And bringing his shaggy brows together, by a movement which wrinkled his wide, flat forehead like that of a tiger's, he made a significant gesture.

"And you may believe me, I put the p'int on my Trojan's toothpick," added the Owl.

Rudolph, with marvellous ease, put his hand under his blouse, and drew out a double-barrelled pistol, which he showed to the Schoolmaster, and then returned it to his pocket.

"Very good; we were made to understand each other; and now I will suppose an impossibility. If they come to arrest me, and you have or have not laid any trap for me, I'll make *cold meat* of you." He glared ferociously at Rudolph.

"And I'll jump on you, and help my blade," cried the Owl.

Rudolph made no reply, but pouring out a glass of wine, drank it off. His coolness deceived the Schoolmaster.

"I merely give you warning."

"No harm did; put your larding-pin into your pocket: you have no chicken to lard. I am an old cock, and have sharp spurs," said Rudolph. "Now let us talk of business."

"Let us talk of business, but do not say a word against my needle. It makes no noise, and is in nobody's way."

"And does its work full measure, and no frothing, doesn't it, my beauty?" added the Owl.

"By the way," said Rudolph to the Owl, "is it true that you know the parents of Goualeuse?"

"My man has two letters about that, but she will never see them—the little whirligig! I would rather tear her eyes out with my own hands. Oh? when I meet her again, I'll settle her reckoning."

"That's enough, Finetta; we do nothing but talk; while business stands still."

"May we uncork before her?" asked Rudolph.

"With perfect confidence? She's a tried one, and will be indispensable to us as a look-out; to get news or 'squeezes' of keys, to fence the swag, or sell them, &c. She possesses every quality of a first-rate housewife? Good Finetta!" added he, extending his hand to the frightful hag; "you can have no idea of the services she has rendered me. But take off your shawl, Finetta, or you'll be cold when you go out; put it on the chair with your maund."

The Screech-Owl took off her shawl.

Notwithstanding his presence of mind, and the self-restraint he possessed, Rudolph could not conceal a start of surprise when he saw suspended by a silver ring, from a thick chain of metal which hung round the hag's neck, a small *Dove* in lapis lazuli, corresponding to the description of the one which the son of Mrs. George had round his neck at the time of his disappearance.

On this discovery, a sudden idea flashed across the mind of Rudolph. According to the Slasher, the Schoolmaster escaped from the hulks six months ago, had since eluded all search after him by disfiguring himself; and just six months ago Mrs. George's husband had disappeared from the hulks, without a trace of him having been discovered. Rudolph surmised that the Schoolmaster was the husband of that unfortunate lady. If this were so, he knew the fate of the son she deplored—he possessed, moreover, some papers relative to the birth of Goualeuse. Rudolph had, therefore, additional incitements to perseverance in his projects; and, fortunately, his absence of mind was not observed by the Schoolmaster, who was occupied in serving the Owl.

"By George! you've a stunning chain there!" said Rudolph to the one-eyed woman.

"Pretty, and not dear," responded the hag, laughing. "It's bogus; but it must do till my man gives me a real one."

"That will depend on present company, Finetta. If our job with him comes off right, why, then——"

"It is astonishing how well it is imitated," pursued Rudolph. "And what's that little blue thing?"

"Christmas-box from my man, till he gives me a *ticker*. Isn't it, my love?"

Rudolph felt his suspicions half confirmed. He anxiously waited for the Schoolmaster's reply, which was: "Ay, but you must take care of that notwithstanding the turnip, Finetta; it is a charm, it brings good luck."

"A charm!" said Rudolph, carelessly: "you don't believe in charms, do you? And where the devil did you get that? Give me the address of the seller."

"They don't make them now, my dear sir—the shop is shut up. Such as you see it, that trinket is of great antiquity—three generations. I value it highly, for it is a kind of family tradition," added he, with a hideous grin; "and that's why I gave it to Finetta, that she might have good luck in the games in which she seconds me with such wonderful ability. You will see her at work! You will see her! If you and I do *business* together, why—but let us go back to our mutton. You say, that in the Allee des Veuves——"

"There is Number 17, a house occupied by a stiffy (rich man), whose name is——"

"I will not be guilty of the rudeness of asking his name. There are, you say, sixty thousand francs in gold in a cabinet?"

"Sixty thousand francs in gold!" cried the Screech-Owl.

Rudolph nodded.

"And you know the ins and outs of the crib?" said the Schoolmaster.

"Like its builder."

"Is the entrance difficult?"

"A wall seven feet high on the side of the Allee des Veuves, a garden, the windows level with it, and the house only one story."

"And only one porter to guard the treasure?"

"That's all."

"What is your plan of action, young man?"

"A very simple one: climb over the wall, and either pick the door-lock, or force open a shutter. That 'll do, won't it?"

"I cannot answer before I have examined it all myself—that is, with the help of my woman: but, if all you tell me is correct, it appears to me that we must strike the iron while hot, to-night?"

He looked earnestly at Rudolph.

"This evening!—impossible!" replied he.

"Why, if the proprietor does not return until the day after to-morrow?"

"Yes, but I—can't go this evening——"

"Really? Well, I can't go to-morrow."

"Why?"

"For the reason that prevents you, this evening," said the ruffian, with a chuckle.

After a moment's reflection, Rudolph resumed:

"Well, be it made this evening. Where shall we meet?"

"We will not part," said the Schoolmaster.

"Why not?"

"What's the use of separating? The weather has cleared up; we will take a walk together, and just give a look at the Allee des Veuves; you will see how my woman knows her trade. That done, we will return and play a hand at crib; and have a bit of something to eat in a place in the Champs Elysees,

that I know, close by the river; and, as the Allee des Veuves is deserted early, we will jog that way about ten o'clock."

"I will join you at nine."

"Do you wish us to do business together, or not?"

"I do wish it."

"Very well; then we do not separate before evening, otherwise——"

"What then?"

"I shall believe that you've got something cooking for me, and that's why you wish to go now."

"If I wanted to whistle the traps down on you, what's to prevent me from doing so this evening?"

"Everything. You did not expect me to propose the affair to you so sudden, and if you do not leave us you can't put anybody on the scent."

"You suspect me, then?"

"I should say I do. But as what you have told me may be true, and as the half of sixty thousand francs is worth going after, I am willing to have a shy at it; but it must be this evening, or never. If it is to be *never*, I shall know what to think of you, and one day or other I will take care and treat you to a dish of my own cooking."

"And I will return your compliment, depend on it."

"Oh, this is all rubbish!" said the Owl. "I agree with my bully; to-night, or not at all."

Rudolph was in a state of cruel anxiety; if he suffered this opportunity to escape of laying hands on the Schoolmaster, he might never again meet with him. The ruffian, ever afterwards on his guard, or, if recognized, apprehended, and taken back to the hulks, would carry with him those secrets which Rudolph had so much interest in knowing. Trusting to chance, and his own skill and courage, he said to the Schoolmaster—

"Agreed! We will not hook it before dark."

"Then I am your man. But it will soon be two o'clock; it is a long way from this to the Allee des Veuves—blow me if it ain't again raining in torrents—let us pay the bill and take a cab."

"If we have a coach, I should like to smoke a 'penny grab,' first."

"Light up!" said the Schoolmaster. "Finetta does not mind the smell of tobacco."

"Well, then, I'll go and get some cigars," said Rudolph, rising.

"Pray, don't give yourself that trouble," said the Schoolmaster, stopping him: "Finetta will go."

Rudolph resumed his seat. The Schoolmaster had penetrated his design. The Owl went out.

"What a good manager I have there!" said the ruffian; "and so willing, she would go through fire for me."

"Talking of fire, it is none too hot here," replied Rudolph, placing both his hands under his blouse. And then, continuing the conversation with the Schoolmaster, he took out a lead pencil and a slip of paper, which he had in his waistcoat pocket, without being perceived, and traced some words hastily, taking care to write the letters wide apart, so that they might be more legible; for he wrote under his blouse, and without seeing the paper.

This note escaped the penetration of the Schoolmaster. But how should he send it to its destination?

Rudolph rose and went careiessly towards the window; then began to hum a tune between his teeth, accompanying himself on the window-panes.

The Schoolmaster came up to the window, and said to Rudolph—

"What air are you humming?"

"I am playing, 'My Rose is not for you!"

"A very pretty tune; I merely wished to see if it would have the effect of inducing any of the passers-by to turn round?"

"I have no such design."

"You are wrong, young man; for you play the tambourine on that pane of glass like a regular Christy's. But I was thinking the porter of this house in the Allee des Veuves is perhaps a determined fellow; if he resists, you have only your barker, which is noisy, while a tool like this (and he showed Rudolph the handle of his poignard) makes no racket, and does not disturb anybody."

"Do you intend to assassinate him, then?" exclaimed Rudolph. "If you have any such idea, let us give up the job at once; I will have no hand in hanging-jobs—so don't rely on me——"

"But if he awakes?"

"We'll hook it."

"As you will; only I like to settle these things beforehand, to prevent confusion. So then ours will be a 'white crack.'"

"Nothing more."

"Young-man-from-the-country work; but you shall have your own way."

"And as I will not leave you for a second," thought Rudolph, "I will prevent you from spilling blood."

CHAPTER XIII.

PREPARATIONS.

THE Screech-Owl re-entered the apartment with the cigars.

"It seems to have left off raining," said Rudolph, lighting his cigar. "Suppose we go see after the coach ourselves—it will stretch our legs."

"What! left off raining!" replied the Schoolmaster: "are you blind? Do you think I will expose Finetta to the risk of catching cold; endanger her precious life, and spoil her new shawl?"

"You are right, old boy; the weather is not

fit for a dog. Well, call the waiter; we will pay, and ask him to call a jarvey," replied Rudolph.

"Ay, ay, now you speak like a book, young fellow. We may go and take a peep about the Allees des Veuves."

The servant entered, and Rudolph gave him a five-franc piece.

"Oh, sir, you are too free—I cannot suffer it," exclaimed the Schoolmaster.

"Nonsense! you stand next."

"Well, well, I'll ride by, on the condition that I pay for something presently, in a little 'bung' in the Champs Elysees, that I know of—a capital shop."

"That will do—we shan't differ."

The servant paid, they went downstairs; Rudolph wished to go last, out of politeness to the Screech-Owl; the Schoolmaster would not allow it, but kept close to him and closely watched all his movements.

The keeper of the house also dealt in wine. Amongst the numerous customers, a charcoal-man, with his face blackened, and his broad hat flapping over his eyes, was paying his reckoning at the counter when our three characters appeared. In spite of the watchfulness of the Schoolmaster and the one-eyed woman, Rudolph, who walked before the hideous pair, exchanged a rapid and imperceptible glance with Murphy as he got into the coach.

"Which way, master?" asked the driver.

Rudolph began in a loud voice: "Allee des——"

"Des Acacias, Bois de Boulogne," broke in the Schoolmaster, interrupting him. Then he added, "Won't split a sixpence, Tommy."

The door was shut.

"What the devil made you blab out which way we were going before those gaping fools?" said the Schoolmaster. "If the affair should be found out to-morrow, such an indication might ruin us. Young man—young man, you are very soft."

The coach went on, as Rudolph answered, "That is true; I did not think of that. But with my pickwick I shall smoke you like bloats; suppose I open a window?"

Suiting the action to the word, Rudolph, with much dexterity, dropped outside the window the small piece of paper, folded very small, on which he had, under his blouse, hastily scribbled the few words in pencil. The glance of the Schoolmaster was so quick, that, in spite of the calmness of Rudolph's features, the ruffian doubtless detected some sudden expression of triumph, for, putting his head out at the window, he called out to the driver, "Whip behind! whip behind! there is some one behind your coach!"

The coach stopped, and the driver standing up on his seat, looked back, and said, "No, master, there's nobody."

"That's your sort, but I'll make sure of that," replied the Schoolmaster, jumping into the street.

Not seeing any person or anything—for, since Rudolph had dropped the paper from the door, the coach had proceeded several paces—the Schoolmaster thought he was mistaken.

"You will only laugh at me," said he, as he resumed his seat. "I don't know why, but I could have sworn some one was following us."

The coach at this moment turned into a cross street. Murphy, who had not lost sight of it, and who had seen Rudolph's postal delivery, ran and picked up the little note, hidden in a fissure between two paving-stones.

At the end of about a quarter of an hour, the Schoolmaster said to the driver of the vehicle, "Nay, my man; we have changed our minds: drive to the Place de la Madelaine."

Rudolph looked at him with astonishment.

"To be sure, young man; from that spot we may go to a thousand different places. If any bother is made about us hereafter, the coachee's evidence won't wash."

The moment the coach approached the barrier, a tall man, dressed in a long whitish riding-coat, with his hat drawn over his eyes, with a countenance appearing of a deep brown, passed rapidly along the road, bending over the neck of a good-looking hunter, which was trotting at an extraordinary rate.

"Like rider like horse!" said Rudolph, leaning towards the coach door, and looking after Murphy (for it was he). "What a pace that chap with the corporation goes! Did you see him?"

"Faith, he passed so quickly," said the Schoolmaster, "that I did not notice him."

Rudolph perfectly concealed his satisfaction. Murphy had, doubtless, deciphered the almost hieroglyphic characters of the note which had escaped the vigilance of the Schoolmaster. Certain that the coach was not followed, the latter became easy, and wishing to imitate the Owl, who slept, or rather pretended to sleep, he said to Rudolph: "Pardon me, young man, but the jolting of a coach has always a singular effect on me—it sends me to sleep like a child."

The ruffian, under pretence of sleeping, expected to be able to read whether the countenance of his companion betrayed any emotion. Rudolph penetrated the design, and replied: "I rose early, and feel not more'n half awake myself; so I will have a nap with you."

He shut his eyes, and very soon the loud snoring of the Schoolmaster and the Screech-Owl so completely deceived Rudolph, that, thinking his companions sound asleep, he half-opened his eyes. But the Schoolmaster and the Owl, notwithstanding their loud snoring, had their eyes open, and exchanged some mysterious signs by means of queerly straightening or crooking their fingers on the palms of their hands. In an instant this

symbolical language ceased; the ruffian no doubt perceiving, by an almost imperceptible sign, that Rudolph was not asleep, exclaimed, with a derisive laugh: "Oh, ho, my bird! what, trying your friends, were you?"

"That ought not to astonish you, who snore with your eyes wide open."

"I? That's different, young man: I am a sleep-walker."

The coach stopped on the Place de la Madelaine. The shower had ceased for a moment, but the clouds, driven by the violence of the wind, were so black and so low, that it was almost as dark as night. Rudolph, the Owl, and the Schoolmaster, went towards the Cours la Reine.

"Young man, I have an idea, and not a bad one," said the ruffian.

"What is it?"

"To make myself certain, if all you have said respecting the interior of the house in the Allée des Veuves is correct."

"You surely will not go there now, under any pretext? that would awaken suspicion."

"I am not such a flat as that comes to, young'un; but why have I a woman whose name is Finetta?"

The Owl tossed her head.

"Twig, young man? Why, she looks like a lobster's horse when he hears the trumpet sounding the charge!"

"You'll send her as spy?"

"That's about it."

"Number 17, Allee des Veuves, isn't it, my man?" cried the Screech-Owl, impatiently. "Be easy; I have but one ogle, but that's a centre-bit."

"Do you see, young man—do you see?—she burns already to be at it."

"If she manages to get in cleverly, your idea is not a bad one."

"Take care of the *umberell*, my blade; in half-an-hour I will be here again, and you shall see what I can do," said the Owl.

"One moment, Finetta; we are going down to the Bleeding Heart—only two steps off. If little *Hoppy* is there, you can take him with you: he can stop outside and watch the door whilst you go in."

"You are right; Hoppy (*Tortillard*) is as cunning as a fox; not ten years old, and yet it was he who, the other day——"

A sign from the Schoolmaster interrupted the speaker.

"What's the Bleeding Heart?—an odd sign for a wine-shop," asked Rudolph.

"You had better complain to the landlord."

"What is his name?"

"The landlord of the Bleeding Heart?"

"Yes."

"Why do you ask? He never wanted to know the handles of his blades."

"But still——"

"Call him what you will—Pat, Tom, Kit, or Barney, he'll come to any of them. But here we are, and in good time too, for the water-works are turned on again. Hark, how the river roars!—it's quite a torrent!—look at it! Two more days of rain, and the water will be above the arches of the bridge."

"You said that we had reached the place where the devil is the ken? I do not see any; house here."

"Certainly not, if you only look round you."

"Where is a cove to look?"

"Under your nose!"

"Under my nose?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"There—look; don't you see the roof? Take care you don't step upon it."

Rudolph had not, in fact, remarked one of those subterranean drinkers' resorts, which a few years ago used to be seen in certain parts of the Champs Elysees, and particularly near the Cours la Reine.

A flight of steps, cut in the damp and greasy ground, led to the bottom of a sort of deep ditch, at one end of which, cut perpendicularly, stood a low, mean, dilapidated hovel. Its roof, covered with mossy tiles, scarcely rose above the step on which Rudolph was standing; two or three huts, built of worm-eaten planks, serving as cellar, wood-house, and rabbit-hutches, formed fitting appurtenances to this wretched den.

A narrow alley, traversing the entire length of this ditch, led from the stairs to the door of the hovel; the rest of the ground was hid under a mass of trellis-work, under the shelter of which were ranged two rows of clumsy tables, fastened to the ground. The wind caused a worn-out sign to grate harshly as it swung on its creaking hinges, and through the dirt that covered it might be distinguished a Red Heart pierced with an Arrow. The sign was suspended on a post erected above this cave—this perfect *human kennel*.

A thick, damp fog was added to the rain as night approached.

"What say you to this hotel, young man?" asked the Schoolmaster.

"Thanks to the torrents that have fallen for the last fortnight, it must be jolly cool. Go on!"

"Stay a moment—I wish to know if our host is at home. Listen!"

The ruffian, thrusting his tongue forcibly against his palate, produced a singular noise—a sort of guttural sound, sonorous and prolonged, which may be thus written—"Kurrooo!" A similar cry arose from the depths of the hovel.

"He's at home," said the Schoolmaster. "Pardon me, young man—the ladies lead off—allow the Owl to pass first: I will follow you. Take care you don't fall, 'tis rather slippery."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BLEEDING HEART.

THE host of the Bleeding Heart, after having replied to the signal of the Schoolmaster, advanced civilly to the threshold of the door.

This personage, whom Rudolph had been to search for in the City, and whom he did not yet recognize by his name, or, rather, his ordinary surname, was Red Arm.

Lank, mean-looking, and debilitated, this man might be about fifty years of age. His countenance bore a resemblance both to the weasel and the rat; his sharp nose, his receding chin, his high cheek bones, his small, keen, and piercing black eyes, gave his features an inimitable expression of acuteness, trickery, and cunning. An old flaxen wig, or rather, of the yellow tint of his bilious complexion, perched on the top of his head, showed the nape of his scraggy neck. He wore a round jacket, and one of those long black aprons commonly used by waiters at wine-shops.

Our trio had scarcely descended the last step of the staircase, when a child not more than ten years of age, ricketty, lame, and somewhat distorted, came to join Red Arm, whom he so strikingly resembled, that it was impossible not to recognize him as his son. There was the same piercing and cunning look, joined to that impudent, hardened, and knavish air, which is peculiar to the scamp of Paris—that fearful type of precocious depravity, that veritable, gallows' orphan, or limb of the triple-tree, or hempseed graft, as they style it, in the terrible language of the prisons. The forehead of the urchin was half hid beneath a thick thatch of yellowish hair, harsh and stiff as bristles. Chestnut-coloured trousers and a grey blouse, fastened by a leather belt, completed Hoppy's costume, thus named on account of his infirmity. He stood close to his father, balanced on his sound leg, like a heron on the side of a swamp.

"There's the little darling!" said the Schoolmaster. "Finetta, night is coming on, and time presses; we must profit by the daylight that remains."

"You are right, my man: I will ask the father to spare the kid."

"Good day, old friend," said Red Arm, addressing the Schoolmaster, in a sharp, squeaking voice, "What can I do for you?"

"We want you to lend your little 'un to my woman for a quarter of an hour; she has lost something close by, and he could help her to look for it."

Red Arm winked, made a sign of intelligence to the Schoolmaster, and then said to his son—"Hoppy, toddle off with the lady."

The hideous child ran, or rather hopped forward, and took hold of the one-eyed woman's hand.

"You duck of a boy! There is a child!" said Finetta. "He comes to me at once!—not like the Nimming Kid, who always seemed to have a stitch in her side when she came near me—the little beggar!"

"Come, be off with you, Finetta! Mind your eye and cultivate the *plant;* I will wait for you here."

"I won't keep you long. Go on first, Tortillard."

The one-eyed hag and the little cripple began to ascend the slippery steps.

"Finetta, take the umbrella," cried the ruffian.

"It 'ud be in my way, my man," said the old woman; and she quickly disappeared with Master Hoppy in the fog, which thickened with the twilight, while the hollow murmur of the wind moaned through the thick and leafless branches of the giant elms of the Champs Elysees.

"Let us go in," said Rudolph.

He was obliged to stoop in passing in at the door of the rookery, which was divided into two apartments. In the one were a counter and a broken-down billiard table: in the other, tables and garden-chairs, which had once been painted green. Two narrow casements, with cracked panes, thickly covered with cobwebs, admitted a feeble light into these rooms, the walls of which were green with mould, and crumbling with the damp.

Rudolph was alone for a minute only. Red Arm and the Schoolmaster during that time exchanged some words, rapidly uttered, and some mysterious signs.

"You'll take a glass of beer—or brandy, perhaps—while we wait for Finetta?" said the Schoolmaster.

"No—I am not thirsty."

"Every one to his taste; for my part, I go in for a brandy," replied the other, seating himself at one of the little green tables in the second apartment.

It now became so dark in this den, that it was impossible to see in one of the angles of this inner apartment the open mouth of one of those vaults which are entered by a double-flapped trap-door, one of which was always kept open for the convenience of serving. The table at which the Schoolmaster sat was close upon this dark and deep hole, to which he turned his back, so that it was entirely concealed from Rudolph's view.

The latter was looking through the window to command his countenance and conceal the workings of his thoughts. The sight of Murphy galloping at full speed through the Allee des Veuves did not wholly assure him; he feared that the worthy gentleman had not quite understood the full meaning of his note, necessarily so laconic, and which contained these words only:—"To-night—ten. Be on your guard."

Determined not to go to the Allee des Veuves before that moment, or to lose sight of the Schoolmaster till that time, he feared, nevertheless, to lose this, the only opportu-

nity that might ever be afforded him of mastering those secrets which he took so deep an interest in discovering. Although powerful and well-armed, he yet found it necessary to resort to cunning to deal with an unscrupulous assassin, capable of anything. Unwilling, however, that his thoughts should be suspected, he seated himself at the table with the Schoolmaster, and called for a glass to keep him company. Red Arm, after a few words, in a low tone, with the ruffian, looked at Rudolph with an air of curiosity, wariness, and sarcasm.

"I am of opinion, young man," said the Schoolmaster, "that if my blowen finds the persons at home whom we want to see, we had better make our call upon them about eight o'clock."

"Too early by two hours," said Rudolph, "and will displease them."

"You think so."

"I am sure of it."

"Nonsense! Friends should not stand upon ceremony."

"I know them well: and I repeat that we ought not to go before ten."

"Ten be hanged, Mr. Obstinate."

"I have given you my opinion, and the devil burn me if I stir from here before ten."

"Don't put yourself out of the way—I never close my establishment before midnight," said Red Arm, in his squeaking voice: "that's the time my best customers come; and my neighbours never complain of the noise made in my house."

"I suppose I must give way to you, young man," replied the Schoolmaster. "Let it be so: we will set out upon our visit at ten o'clock."

"Here is the Owl!" said Red Arm, hearing and replying to a warning cry similar to that uttered by the Schoolmaster before he descended to the subterraneous abode.

A minute afterwards the Screech-Owl entered the billiard-room alone.

"It's all right, my man—safe as in your pocket!" cried the one-eyed woman as she came in.

Red Arm discreetly withdrew, without making any inquiry about Hoppy, whom probably he did not expect to see again for the present. The hag sat down opposite Rudolph and the brigand.

"Well?" said the Schoolmaster.

"The lad has spoken the truth, so far."

"*In* course!" exclaimed Rudolph.

"Let the Owl unreel, young man. Go on, Finetta!"

"I went straight to No. 17, leaving Tortillard in a ditch as a watch. It was still daylight. I rung at a little half-door—hinges out—you can get two fingers between the bottom and the threshold—nothing worth notice. I rang; the porter opened. Before I rang, I thrust my cap into my pocket, that I might look like a neighbour. As soon as I saw the porter, I began to blubber with all my might, pretending that I had lost my parrot, Cocotte—a little creature that I adored. I said that I lived in the Avenue de Marbœuf, and had pursued Cocotte from garden to garden. I entreated him to allow me to enter, to seek for my bird."

"Ahem!" said the Schoolmaster, with an air of proud satisfaction, pointing to Finetta, "there's a woman for you!"

"It was very neat," said Rudolph; but what then?"

"The porter gave me leave to look for my bird, and I went trotting about the garden, calling, 'Cocotte! Cocotte!' looking up in the air and about me in every direction to see what was to be seen. Inside the walls," resumed the old woman, continuing her description of the place—"inside the walls trellis-work all round—a regular staircase; at the corner of the wall, to the left, a tall fir-tree, werry picture of a ladder—a woman in the family-way could descend by it. The house has six windows on the ground-floor; there is no other story—and there are four air-holes to the cellar without gratings. The windows of the ground-floor close with shutters, and have hooks below, and bolts and staples in the upper part: press in the bottom, give a twist to your wire——"

"A push," said the Schoolmaster, "and she's open."

The Owl continued: "The entrance-door is glazed, with two Venetian blinds outside."

"What a memory!" said the brigand.

"That's it, as precisely as if one were there," said Rudolph.

"To the left," resumed the Screech-Owl, "near the court-yard, is a well: the rope might be of service, as at that part there is no trellis-work against the wall, in case a mizzle should be cut off in the direction of the door. On entering the house——"

"You entered the house? She got into the house, young man!" said the Schoolmaster, exultingly.

"Certainly, I got in! Not finding Cocotte, I had sobbed and cried so much, that I pretended to be almost choking; I begged the porter to allow me to sit down on the door-step; the good fellow asked me in, and offered me a glass of wine and water. 'A glass of water,' I said; plain water only, my good sir.' Then he made me go into the ante-chamber, carpeted all over—excellent precaution! neither footsteps nor the fall of glass can be heard, if we must star the glaze, to the right and left are doors with bolts, which will open with breathing upon. At the end of the room was a strong door, locked—looked very much like a strong box; it *smells of money*. I had my wax in my basket——"

"She had her wax, young man! she never travels without her wax!" said the ruffian.

The Owl went on:—

"It was necessary for me to approach the door which smelt so strongly of money. I

pretended to be suddenly seized with a dreadful fit of coughing—so violent, that I was compelled to lean against the wall. On hearing me bark, the porter said, "I'll go and get you a lump of sugar to put in your water.' Most likely he looked for a spoon, for I heard the chink of plate—plate in the room on the right hand; don't forget that, my blade. Well, still coughing and groaning, I reached the door at the further end of the room, I had my wax in the palm of my hand. I leaned against the lock, as if by accident, and as though I had nothing in my hand, and here is the squeeze; if it is of no use to-day, it may be at some other time."

She gave the ruffian a small piece of yellow wax, on which the form of the keyhole was perfectly impressed.

"Perhaps you can tell us whether this is really the door of the strong-box?" said the Screech-Owl.

"It is; and there is the money," replied Rudolph. Then he added, in an undertone, "So Murphy has been the dupe of this miserable old wretch! It may be so; he will not expect to be attacked before ten o'clock; by that time he will have taken the necessary steps."

"But all the money is not there," continued the Owl, her one green eye sparkling with triumph. "As I approached the windows, still looking for Cocotte, I saw in one of the rooms to the left of the door, some bags of crown pieces on a chest of drawers. I saw them as plainly as I see you, my man; and there were at least a dozen of them."

"Where is Hoppy?" inquired the Schoolmaster, suddenly.

"Still in his hole, not more than two paces from the garden-gate. He can see in the dark like a mole-cat. There is no other entrance to No. 17, and when we go he will tell us if any one has been."

"That's good——"

Scarcely had the Schoolmaster uttered these words than he threw himself suddenly upon Rudolph, seized him by the throat, and threw him violently down into the cellar, which was yawning behind the table.

The attack was so rapid, so unexpected, so powerful, that Rudolph could neither foresee nor escape from it. The Screech-Owl, alarmed, uttered a piercing cry; for, at the first, she had not perceived the result of this momentary struggle. When the noise of Rudolph's body falling down the steps had ceased, the Schoolmaster, who knew perfectly all the under-ground secrets of the place, descended slowly into the cavern, listening attentively as he went.

"My blade, be on your guard!" cried the one-eyed woman, leaning over the opening of the trap;—"knife him!"

The ruffian disappeared without replying. For a time, nothing was heard; but after a few moments the distant noise of a door, which creaked on its rusty hinges, rose dismally from the depths of the cavern: then all was silent again. The darkness was impenetrable. The Owl fumbled in her basket, struck a chemical match, and lighted a small candle, which shed a feeble ray through the dreary place.

At this moment the horrid countenance of the Schoolmaster appeared at the opening of the trap. The Owl could not repress a cry of terror at the sight of that ghastly, seamed, mutilated, and terrific visage, with eyes that gleamed like phosphorus, and appeared to glare on the ground in the midst of the darkness which the feeble taper scarcely dissipated. Recovering her self-possession, the old wretch exclaimed in a tone of fiendish flattery:—"You must be frightful, indeed, my love, for you actually frightened me—yes, me!"

"Quick, quick, to the Allee des Veuves!" said the ruffian, securely closing the two flaps of the door with a bar of iron. "Perhaps in another hour it may be too late. If it is a trap, it is not yet set; if it is not, why, there won't be too many in the job."

CHAPTER XV.

THE CAVERN.

STUNNED by his horrible fall, Rudolph lay senseless and motionless at the bottom of the stairs of the vault. The Schoolmaster, dragging him to the entrance of a second and still deeper cellar, threw him into it, closing and bolting a thick iron-clamped door. He then rejoined the Owl, to engage with her in the commission of a robbery, perhaps a murder, in the Allee des Veuves.

In about an hour Rudolph began gradually to recover his senses. He was extended on the ground, in thick darkness; he stretched out his arms, and touched some stone steps. Feeling something cold at his feet, he put down his hand, and discovered a pool of water.

By a violent effort he succeeded in seating himself upon the lowermost step. His confusion slowly passed away, and he moved in several directions. Happily none of his limbs were broken. He listened, but could hear nothing, except a dull, feeble, and continuous gurgling. At first he did not suspect the cause of this. As his thoughts became clearer, the circumstances of the surprise of which he had been the victim, returned to his mind. He was fast recovering the clear use of his faculties, when he felt his feet again wet. He stooped down: the water was above his ancle. And amidst the mournful silence which surrounded him, still was heard that low, faint, but continued gurgling! Now he understood its cause:—the waters were rising in the cavern! The Seine was unusually swollen, and this horrid place was below the river's level.

Rudolph was reanimated by this threatening peril: quick as thought he rushed up the humid stairs. He reached the top; he dashed himself against the door. In vain—it remained unshaken in its jambs!

In this desperate situation his first fear was for Murphy. "If he is not on his guard, that monster will assassinate him," thought Rudolph; "and it is to me he will owe his destruction! Poor Murphy!" This agonizing reflection maddened Rudolph; fixing himself firmly on his feet, and contracting his shoulders, he exhausted himself in fruitless efforts to force the door—he could not even slightly shake it! Hoping to find something in the cellar which might serve as a lever, he descended the steps. On the lower stair two or three round elastic bodies rolled from under his feet: they were rats, which the rushing waters had driven from their holes. He traversed the cavern, groping carefully, but found nothing: the water was mid-leg deep! He slowly reascended the stairs in dark, deep, and utter despair. He counted the steps; there were thirteen, and three were already under water.

Thirteen! A fatal number! In certain positions, even the firmest minds are not proof against superstitious ideas: in this number Rudolph fancied an evil omen. The probable fate of Murphy recurred to him. He sought in vain for some opening between the ground and the door: the humidity had swelled the wood, and it was hermetically joined to the clayey soil.

Rudolph cried loudly, in the hope of being heard by the guests of the cabaret; then listened in an agony of suspense. He heard nothing save the low, dull, feeble, continuous gurgling of the ever-encroaching waters.

The despairing Rudolph now seated himself with his back leaning against the door; he wept for his friend, who, probably, at that instant struggled beneath the knife of an assassin. Most bitterly did he now regret his imprudent and audacious projects, notwithstanding their generous motive. He recalled with anguish a thousand proofs of the devotedness of Murphy, who, rich and honoured, had quitted a beloved wife and child, to assist Rudolph in the noble expiation which the latter had imposed upon himself.

The waters rose: five steps only remained dry. Standing upright, Rudolph with his head touched the vaulted roof of the cellar: he could calculate how long his agony would endure! The death which threatened him was slow, silent, frightful. He recollected his pistol: at the risk of mutilating himself, by firing it pointblank in such a manner as to shatter the lock of the door, he hoped to be able to force it. He felt for the weapon but found it not: it had fallen from his pocket in his struggle with the Schoolmaster.

Untroubled by his fears on Murphy's account, Rudolph would have awaited death with comparative serenity. If he had done evil deeds, he had also done good, and he would fain have continued to do so—God knew it! Far from murmuring against his fate, he only saw in that destiny the just punishment of a crime not yet expiated.

A new horror now came to try his resignation. The rats, chased by the waters, had taken refuge from step to step, cut off from any outlet by which to escape. Unable to climb the door or the perpendicular walls, they swarmed on the garments of Rudolph. His horror and disgust were unspeakable, as he felt their cold, clammy paws, and wet, hairy bodies clinging to his person. He endeavoured to beat them off; cold, sharp bites bathed his hands in blood. Again he raised his voice in wild shouts of agony; the dull echo of the vault and the gurgling waters alone replied. A few short moments, and he would be bereft of power to call; the water had reached his throat, and ere long would gush in at his lips!

The pent-up air of that narrow place now began to fail; the first symptoms of asphyxia assailed Rudolph—the arteries of his temples beat violently, his brain swam—he was at the point of death. Already the waters bubbled in his ears; he fancied that he was whirled round and round: the last spark of consciousness was wellnigh extinct, when hasty steps and the sound of voices were heard near the door of the vault.

Hope reanimated his expiring faculties; in that morbid tension of the soul, he drank in these words, the last he heard and understood: "Don't you see now," asked one voice, "that there is no one here?"

"I've got to give in; that is true," said the voice of the Slasher, in a tone of disappointment. The sound of footsteps died away!

Rudolph, unnerved, could bear no more; he sunk to the ground, and slipped helplessly down the steps.

Suddenly the door of the cellar was burst violently in from without; the water contained in the subterraneous dungeon rushed out as on the opening of a sluice; and the Slasher (whose opportune return shall be accounted for by-and-bye) seized the arms of Rudolph, who, half drowned, was still convulsively grasping the threshold of the door.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SICK-NURSE.

SNATCHED by the Slasher from inevitable death, and removed to the house in the Allee des Veuves, which had been reconnoitred by the Screech-Owl previous to the attempt on it by the Schoolmaster, Rudolph is in bed, in a comfortably furnished room. A large fire crackles on the hearth; a lamp, placed on a table, sheds a strong, clear light through the apartment; while the couch, surrounded by

thick curtains of green damask, remains in shade.

A negro of middling stature, with white hair and eyebrows, wearing an orange and green riband at the button-hole of his blue coat, seated by the bedside, holds in his left hand a seconds' watch, which he appears to consult while counting with his right hand the beating of Rudolph's pulse. The negro, with a sad and pensive countenance, continues to watch the sleeper with an expression of the most tender solicitude.

The Slasher, clothed in rags, and caked with mud, his arms hanging listlessly down, and his hands crossed, stands at the foot of the bed; his red beard is long; his thick flaxen hair is matted with mud, and dripping wet; while his hard, bronzed features express the deepest commiseration for the patient. He breathes with constraint, scarcely daring to inflate his ample chest, for fear the noise should disturb the invalid. Uneasy at the meditative attitude of the black doctor, and fearing an unfavourable prognosis, he hazards, in a low whisper, this philosophic reflection, as he gazes upon Rudolph: "Who would suppose now, seeing him lie there so helpless, he could ever have given me that drubbing? He will soon get his strength again though, don't you think so, Mr. Doctor? On my word, I would not mind his beating the news of his recovery upon my back, if that would do him any good—how is he, doctor?"

The negro answers with a slight wave of the hand, the Slasher is silent.

"The draught!" said the doctor.

The Slasher, who had respectfully left his iron-bound shoes at the door, went towards the chest of drawers, walking on tiptoes as lightly as possible; but with such drawing up of legs, extension of arms, and swelling out of back and shoulders, as would have been exceedingly diverting under other circumstances. The poor fellow seemed endeavouring to collect his whole weight in that part of his body which did not touch the floor; but with all this care, and in spite of the carpet, the room trembled beneath his ponderous person. Unfortunately, what with ardour to acquit himself handsomely, and his fear of dropping the delicate phial he was bringing so over-carefully, he squeezed the slight neck so tightly in his huge hand, that he crushed it to atoms, and the precious liquid was spilled on the carpet.

At the sight of this misfortune, the Slasher remained in mute astonishment, one of his huge legs in the air, his toes nervously contracted, and looking confusedly, first at the doctor, and then at the fragments of the bottle, which still remained in his hand.

"Clumsy devil!" exclaimed the negro, impatiently.

"Thundering muff that I am!" added the Slasher, apostrophizing himself.

"Oh!" cried the Esculapius, as he looked at the table, "happily you took the wrong one, it is the other phial I want."

"That little red bloke?" whisperingly inquired the clumsy sick-nurse.

"Certainly—there is but that."

The Slasher, turning quickly round upon his heels, after his old military fashion, crushed the fragments of glass; feet more delicate would have been cruelly cut, but the lighterman had a pair of natural sandals, hard as the hoof of a horse.

"Take care! you will cut yourself," cried the physician.

The Slasher paid no attention to this recommendation. Wholly absorbed in discharging his new mission in a manner that would efface all recollection of his former clumsiness, it can hardly be imagined with what scrupulous delicacy and lightness of touch, spreading out his huge fingers, he this time secured the fragile crystal. A butterfly would not have left an atom of the golden dust of its wings between his thumb and forefinger. The black doctor trembled lest some new accident should arise from this excess of caution; but, happily, the potion safely reached its destination. As the Slasher approached the bed, he again smashed beneath his feet some fragments of the broken phial.

"Stupid fellow!" whispered the doctor; "do you want to cripple yourself?"

The Slasher stared with surprise. "*Cripple* myself, Mr. Doctor!"

"Yes; this is twice you have trodden on the broken glass!"

"Oh, if that's all, don't trouble yourself; I have natural soles twice as hard as wooden ones."

"A small spoon," said the doctor.

The Slasher recommenced his sylphidian evolutions, and brought the article requested by the physician.

After a few spoonsful of the mixture, Rudolph stirred, and feebly moved his hands.

"Good! good! he is recovering from his swoon," said the doctor to himself. "The bleeding has relieved him: he is out of danger."

"Saved! Bravo! That's your sort!" exclaimed the Slasher, in the explosion of his joy.

"Hold your tongue, and be quiet!" said the negro.

"Yes, Mr. Doctor."

"His pulse is more regular—excellent—excellent——"

"And that poor friend of M. Rudolph's, Mr. Doctor?—thunder and lightning! when he hears that—as luck would have it——"

"Silence!"

"Yes, Mr. Doctor."

"And sit down."

"But, Mr. Doc——"

"Sit down, I say! You disturb me, fidgetting round me—you distract my attention. Sit down and be quiet."

"Mr. Doctor, I am as dirty as a raft of wood just landed. I should spoil the furniture."

"Then sit down on the ground."

"I should dirty the carpet."

"Do what you like, but for Heaven's sake, be quiet!" said the doctor, impatiently; then, throwing himself in an arm-chair, he leaned his head upon his hands.

After a moment of profound cogitation, the Slasher, less from any need for rest than the wish to obey the doctor's orders, took a chair with the greatest precaution, turned it over with an air of perfect self-satisfaction, and laid the back upon the carpet, with the commendable intention of seating himself modestly and properly upon the front bars, thus avoiding all risk of soiling the seat; this he effected after all sorts of delicate contrivances. Unfortunately, he was by no means well informed on the laws of the lever and the equilibrium of bodies—the chair overbalanced —the luckless fellow made an involuntary movement with his arms before him, and capsized a table which bore a tray and a set of tea-things.

At the terrific noise caused by this disaster, the doctor sprang from his seat; while Rudolph, waking with a start, raised himself on his elbow, looked anxiously about him, recovered his ideas, and exclaimed—

"Murphy! where is Murphy?"

"Your royal highness may rest assured," answered the negro, respectfully, "there is every hope of his recovery."

"He is wounded?" cried Rudolph.

"Alas! yes, your highness."

"Where is he? I wish to see him!" Rudolph endeavoured to rise, but fell back again, overcome by the pain of his contusions, which were now stiffening. "Carry me this instant to Murphy, since I cannot walk!" he exclaimed.

"Your highness, he sleeps: it would be dangerous, as yet, to expose him to the slightest cause for emotion."

"Oh! you are deceiving me—he is dead! He has been murdered! and I—I am the cause!" cried Rudolph in agony, raising his clasped hands towards heaven.

"Your highness knows that I am incapable of a falsehood. I affirm, by my honour, that Murphy lives; severely wounded, it is true, but his chance of recovery is all but certain."

"You say that but to prepare me for worse tidings: he is, doubtless, in a dangerous state."

"Your highness——"

"I am certain of it: you endeavour to deceive me. I will see him instantly; take me to him. The sight of a friend is always salutary."

"Once more, I solemnly affirm to your royal highness, that, unless something quite out of the usual course should occur, Murphy ought to be soon well."

"Is it so, indeed, my dear David?"

"It is, your highness."

"Listen, then! You know the esteem in which I hold you; from the time you became one of my household you have always possessed my confidence—never have I distrusted your profound skill; but I conjure you, if a consultation be necessary——"

"That was my first thought. Besides, I have been very tenacious of introducing strangers here until I knew whether your highness's orders of yesterday——"

"But how has all this happened?" said Rudolph, interrupting the negro. "Who dragged me from that dreadful cavern where I seemed already drowned? I have a confused recollection of having heard the Slasher's voice: was I mistaken?"

"No, no; that brave man can inform you of every circumstance, for 'tis he alone who did it all."

"But where is he? where is he?"

The doctor cast his eyes around for the awkward sick-nurse, who, confused at his fall, had concealed himself behind the bed-curtain.

"Here he is," said the doctor, "he seems rather bashful."

"Let us see you; come forward, my brave fellow!" said Rudolph, extending his hand to his preserver.

The Slasher's confusion was heightened by his having heard the negro doctor address Rudolph as "your royal highness," in several of his replies.

"Come here, and give me your hand," said Rudolph.

"Pardon me, sir—I should say, my lord—highness—but——"

"Call me M. Rudolph, as hitherto; I prefer that."

"And so do I—it bothers me less. Be so good as to excuse my hand; I've done so much work lately, though——"

"Your hand, I say!"

Overcome by this perseverance, the Slasher timidly extended his black and horny hand. Rudolph pressed it cordially.

"Come now, sit down, and tell me all about it. How did you discover the cavern? But I think I can guess—the Schoolmaster?"

"He is here secured," said the negro doctor.

"Corded together like two plugs of tobacco —he and the Owl. Considering the figure they must needs cut if they look at one another, I should say they must dislike the partnership pretty considerably by this time!"

"And my poor Murphy! I as yet am thinking only of myself! Where is he wounded, David?"

"In the right side; but, fortunately, near the lowermost false rib."

"Oh! I must have a terrible revenge! David, I rely upon you."

"My lord knows that I am his, body and soul," replied the negro, coldly.

"But how did you get here in time, my brave fellow?" said Rudolph to the Slasher.

"If you please, my lor—no, sir—highness—Rudolph—I will begin with the beginning——"

"You're right. I am listening: and remember you call me M. Rudolph."

"Very well. You know that yesterday you said to me, on returning from the country, where you had been with poor Goualeuse: 'Try find the Schoolmaster in the City; tell him you know of a famous blow to be struck: that you don't choose to be "in" it; but that if he wishes your place, he has only to be to-morrow (that was this morning) at the barrier of Bercy, at the Flower Basket, and there he would see the man who put up the job.'"

"What then?"

"On leaving you, I legged to the City. I went to the Ogress's, no signs of the Schoolmaster; I went up the Rue St. Eloi, on to the Rue aux Feves, then to the Rue de la Vieille Draperie—devil a bit of him could I see. At last I caught him with that crawling old reptile the Owl, in front of Notre Dame, at the shop of a botcher, a dealer in second-hand clothes, a *fence*, and a thief: they were flaring up with the flimsies they had stolen from the long gent in black, who wanted to do something to you: they were buying all sorts of goods, right and left. The Owl cheapened a red shawl—the old hag! I chanted my lay to the Schoolmaster; he said it was a safe hit; and that he would be at the rendezvous. Good! This morning, according to your orders of yesterday, I ran here to bring you the answer. You said to me, 'My lad, return to-morrow before daybreak: you must pass the day in my house, and in the evening you shall see something worth looking at.' You did not let me into more than that, but I was fly. Says I to myself, 'This is a trap laid to catch the Schoolmaster to-morrow by a duffing crack.' He's an out-and-out villain. He murdered the cattle-dealer, and, they say, another person besides in the Rue du Roule. I was awake to it."

"I was wrong not to have told you all, my fine fellow; then this horrible catastrophe might perhaps have been avoided."

"That was your look-out, M. Rudolph; my object was to serve you; because—because—I don't know how or why, but, as I have said before, I feel as if I were your bulldog. But that's nothing. Then I says to myself, 'M. Rudolph pays me for my time, so my time is his, and I will employ it for him.' Then this idea strikes me: The Schoolmaster is cunning, he may fear a made-up song. M. Rudolph will propose to him the job for to-morrow, it is true, but the *wide-awake cove* is like enough to come to-day, and lurk about here, to study the ground, and, if he mistrusts M. Rudolph, bring some other magsman with him, and do the job to-day on his own account. To spoil this, says I to myself, 'I must go and plant myself somewhere where I can watch the walls and the garden-door—there is no other entrance. If I find a snug corner, as it rains, I will remain there all day, if not all night, and to-morrow morning I shall be already to go with M. Rudolph.' So I returns to the Allee des Veuves, to plant myself. What did I see? A little wine-shop not ten paces from your door! I seats myself on the ground-floor near the window, and calls for wine and a handful of walnuts, saying I expected some friends—a hump-backed man and a tall woman. I chose them because it would look more natural-like. I installed myself, and there I sat right opposite to your door. It rained till it rattled again!—nobody came; the night drew on——"

"But," interrupted Rudolph, "why did you not come into the house?"

"It's just this here way. You told me to look in the day arter, M. Rudolph. I didn't dare to call before. I'd look like a sneak—a laggard—as sogers say. You're up to my meaning? Well, there I was stuck by the window, cracking my nuts, and sipping my red swipes, when through the fog I sees the Screech-Owl flap along with Red Arm's kid, little Hoppy. 'Crikey!' says I to myself, I says, 'the pot's a biling!' The young beggar he drops under in one of the ditches over again' your door, like as if he was on'y gets ting casual relief from the rain, but playing the mole. The Owl pulls off her bonnet, stuffs it into her pocket, and pulls the tinkler. Out comes your friend, poor M. Murphy, who let-in old One-eyes, and, blast me, if she didn't begin throwing up her arms, and pelting up and down the garden. I could have punched myself for not being 'live to what she was carrying on about. At last she toddles out, claps on her bonnet, gives Hoppy a word, who pops back into his hole, and makes her lucky. I goes on to myself, 'Hold your horses! Don't be in a hurry to kick! Hoppy comes with the Owl; that signifies the Schoolmaster and M. Rudolph are still in Red Arm's. The Owl came to take measure of the crib, and they're sure to crack it to-night. If they come for to do it to-night, why, M. Rudolph, who thought it was "on" for to-morrow, will be took in. If he's sold, I must cut over to Red Arm's to see what's up. Yes, but s'pose, meanwhile, the Schoolmaster comes here? That's to be thought on. Anyhow, I'll go into the house, and tell M. Murphy, "It's a do! 'ware hawk!" Nice to look at, but that little varmint Hoppy is by the door; he'll hear me ring, see me, and tip the Screech-Owl the office; if she comes back, we're all in a hole, especially as M. Rudolph, perhaps, after all, made all square for this very evening.' Confound it, these argooments spilt my brain out of its barrow awfully. I was the biggest kind of noodle, and could only see smoke afore me. I didn't know what to do. Says I, 'Let's go out, maybe the open air will freshen you up a bit!' I took off my neck-cloth and shirt, went to Hoppy's ditch,

nabbed him by the scruff of the neck—he didn't squeal, and bite, and scratch one bit, oh, no!—rammed him into my blouse like as in a bag, tied up the top end with my sleeves, t'other with my belcher. He could breathe. I took the bundle under my arm, marked a swampy sort of a kind of garden, with a low wall all round it, and slung Hoppy slap into the middle of a cabbage-bed. He squealed like a stuck sucking-pig, but you couldn't hear him the length of your arm off. I made off, and none too soon. I shinned up one of the big trees of the Allee, just opposite your door, over Hoppy's ditch. In ten minutes I heard steps. It still poured, and pitch-dark. I listened. It was Screech-Owl, sure as a gun. 'Hoppy, Hop-py,' she said, in a low voice. 'It weeps—and the little imp got tired of waiting,' growled the Schoolmaster, ripping out an oath; 'if I get my *ten* on him, I'll take the hide off him!' 'Not so fast, my blade,' said the Owl; 'maybe he's muzzled to put us on the watch. Suppose it's a take-in? The greeny wouldn't think of comin' before ten——' 'The werry reason,' said the Schoolmaster; 'it's only seven now. You saw the shiners? Nothing venture, nothing urn! Hand over the ripping chisel and the jemmy——'"

"The tools?" queried Rudolph.

"Red Arm's. Oh, he keeps house to rights! In next to no time the door is forced. 'Stay there,' said the Schoolmaster to the Owl; 'keep a sharp look-out, and cry—laybones! if you hear anything.' 'Put your *pinking-iron* in the button-hole of your weskit, that it may be handy if you want it,' said the one-eyed woman. The Schoolmaster entered the garden; so soon as I saw that, down I jumped from my tree, and fell on the Owl; I silenced her with two blows of my fist—beauties they were too!—and down she went, mute as a fish. I ran into the garden, but, thunder! M. Rudolph! it was too late——"

"Poor Murphy!"

"He was rolling with the Schoolmaster on the door-steps; although wounded, he held his man tight, and no snivelling. Brave man! he is like a good dog—he bites hard, but doesn't bark, as they say. I went dash at 'em, hit or miss, seizing the Schoolmaster by one leg, the only part I could at the moment get at. 'The more the merrier! it's I!—the Slasher!—make room for two, Mr. Murphy.' 'Oh, villain! where do you come from?' cries the Schoolmaster, taken aback. 'What's that to you?' says I, fixing one of his legs between my knees, and grasping his arm with my other hand—it was that in which he held his sticker—his favourite. 'M. Rudolph?' asked M. Murphy of me, whilst doing all in his power to help——'

"Brave! excellent man!" murmured Rudolph, in a tone of deep grief.

"'I know nothing of him,' says I; 'this villain, perhaps, has killed him.' And then I pitched with double fury into the Schoolmaster, who tried to fetch me a lick; but I lay with my breast on his arm, so he had only his fist at liberty. 'All alone?' says I to Murphy, whilst we kept on lock-legged with the Schoolmaster. 'There are people close by here,' he replied, 'but they would not hear me cry out.' 'Is it far off?' 'They would be here in ten minutes.' 'Let us call for help, there are passers-by who will come to our assistance.' 'No, as we have got him, we must keep him here. But as I am growing weak—I am wounded.' 'Thunder! then run and seek some assistance, if you have strength left: I will try and hold him.' M. Murphy disengaged himself, and I was alone with the Schoolmaster. Thunder! I don't want to sing loud of myself, but there was one moment when I didn't think there was much sport in it. We were partly on the ground, partly on the bottom step of the portico. I had my arms round the beggar's neck—by jowl; he was blowing like a bull, I heard his teeth grind. It was dark—it rained in streams: the lamp left in the passage was in a snooze. I had twisted one of his legs between mine; but in spite of that, he was so strong in the belt, that he moved us both on to the level ground. He tried to bite me, but couldn't; I never felt so strong. Hi, Neddy! my heart beat, but it was in the right place. I said: 'Here's me, a-hold on a mad dog, I must prevent him from biting.' 'Let me go, and I'll cry quits,' groaned the Schoolmaster, in an exhausted voice. 'Oh! you are funking!' says I to him: 'it comes out now; your pluck is nothing but your strength! You wouldn't have wired into the Poissy cattle-dealer to clear him out, if he had been as strong as me—eh?' 'No,' says he, 'but I'll go through you as I did him.' Saying that he gave me such a powerful body-heave, stiffening his legs at the same time, that he turned me half round: if I had not kept a good grip of the wrist that grasped the poniard, I'd a been finished. At this moment my sou'-paw slipped, and I was compelled to slacken my hold. It was nearly all over. I said to myself: 'I am under, he is a-top—he's got me. No matter, I had rather be in my place than in his; since M. Rudolph said that I had heart and honour.' I felt *that* was true! Well, there I was, when what did I see but the Owl a-standing close by us, with her round green eye and her bang-up red shawl! Fire and fury! I thought I had the nightmare! 'Finetta,' cried the Schoolmaster to her, 'I have dropt my knife: pick it up—there it is—it's under him—strike—strike home—in the back—between the shoulders—quick!" . . . . 'Wait, wait a moment, my blade; only wait till I find it.' And there was the Owl hovering, hovering round us, like an old croaking Owl, as she is. At last she saw the tickler, and made a dart at it. I was flat on my back, so I gave her a kick in the bread-basket, and down she went with both her claws, shivery-shako in the air!

Up she sprang, more bloodthirsty than ever. I was done for: still I clung convulsively to the Schoolmaster's throttle, but he gave me such dreadful blows on the jaw, that I was about to loose my hold, when I saw three or four flunkeys, well armed, who came tumbling down the steps, and M. Murphy, pale as death, supporting himself on the arm of the doctor. They seized upon the Schoolmaster and the Owl, and bound them hand and foot. That was not all. I wanted M. Rudolph. I sprang upon the Screech-Owl: I thought of poor Gourlouse's tooth; I grasped the old hag's arm with all my might, and twisted it, saying, 'Where is M. Rudolph?' She stood it well: at the second twist she roared out: 'At Red Arm's, in the cellar, at the Bleeding Heart—wish it was yours, blast you!' Good! On my way I wished to pick up Hoppy from his bed among the cabbages, for it was all in my road. I looked, there was nothing but my blouse—he had gnawed a hole with his grinders. I reached the Bleeding Heart; I collared Red Arm, and said: 'Where is the young man who came here this evening with the Schoolmaster?' 'Don't squeeze me so hard, and I'll tell you. They have been playing a trick with him, they have locked him up in my cellar—we'll go and let him out.' Down we went, but there was no one to be found. 'No doubt he went out while my back was turned,' said Red Arm; 'you see he is not here.' I was coming away very sorrowful, when, by the lantern light, I saw another door at the far end of the cellar. I ran towards it; I dragged it open; and ketched a bucket of water slap dash in my face. I saw your poor arms in the air; I fished you out and brought you here on my back, because there was nobody I could send for a hackney-coach. That's the whole of the affair, M. Rudolph; and though I don't wish to brag, I don't think I have done amiss, and feel quite cockahoop with myself."

"My lad, I owe my life to you; a heavy obligation, but I will discharge it to the best of my ability. David, will you go and ascertain how Murphy is?" added Rudolph; "and return to me immediately."

The negro went out.

"Do you know where the Schoolmaster is, my fine fellow?"

"In a room below, along with the Screecher. Will you send to the station-house, M. Rudolph?"

"No."

"You are not going to let him off? Oh, M. Rudolph, don't throw away your kindness on such a bad case. I say again, he is no better than a mad dog; once loose, let those who are near him look out."

"He will bite no one again, be assured."

"Oh, you are going to shut him up somewhere?"

"No: in half-an-hour he will go hence."

"The Schoolmaster will?"

"Yes."

"Without crown-buttons each side of him?"

"Yes."

"He will leave here—free?"

"Free."

"All alone?"

"Quite alone."

"But he will go——?"

"Wherever he pleases," said Rudolph, interrupting the Slasher with a meaning smile.

The negro returned.

"Well, David, and how is Murphy?"

"He sleeps," said the doctor, sadly: "his respiration is laboured——"

"Still in danger?"

"His case is serious, your highness; nevertheless, there is hope that——"

"Oh, Murphy! Vengeance! vengeance!" cried Rudolph, in a tone of intense fury. Then he added: "David, a word——"

And he whispered in the negro's ear. The latter shuddered.

"Do you hesitate?" said Rudolph. "I have often spoken to you of this idea; the moment to carry it out is arrived."

"I do not hesitate, your highness. The idea contains in itself a penal reform, worthy the discussion of the most profound jurists, for such a punishment would be at the same time awe-striking, and fruitful for repentance. To this case it is particularly adapted. Without reckoning the crimes which sent this wretch to the hulks for life, he has committed three murderous attempts—the cattle-dealer, Murphy, and yourself: it is justice——"

"He will have a long road opened to him to repentance," added Rudolph. After a moment's silence, he resumed: "And will five thousand francs be sufficient, David?"

"Amply, my lord."

"My lad," said Rudolph to the Slasher, who seemed perplexed in the extreme; "I have two words to say to this gentleman; meantime, go into the next room, on the right, you will see there a large red pocket-book on a sideboard; take out of that, five notes of a thousand francs each, and bring them to me."

"And for whom are those five thousand francs?" exclaimed the Slasher, involuntarily.

"For the Schoolmaster; and, at the same time, order them to bring him here."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PUNISHMENT.

THE scene is changed to an apartment tapestried with red, and brilliantly lighted.

Rudolph, enveloped in a long black velvet dressing-gown, which added to the pallor of his countenance, is seated at a large table covered with cloth. On this table lies the Schoolmaster's pocket-book, the Screech-Owl's pinchbeck chain (to which was sus-

pended the small lapis-lazuli dove), the stiletto, yet gore-stained, with which Murphy had been stabbed, the iron bar with which the door had been broken open, and lastly, the five thousand-franc notes, which the Slasher had brought from the next apartment.

The negro doctor sits one side of the table, the Slasher on the other. The Schoolmaster, securely bound with ropes, and utterly unable to move, is placed in a large stuffed arm-chair on castors, in the middle of the room. The men who brought in this man have retired, and Rudolph, the doctor, the Slasher, and the assassin remain alone.

Rudolph is no longer irritated: he is calm, sad, and collected; as befits one who is about to discharge a solemn and important duty. The physician is thoughtful. The Slasher feels a fear: he cannot withdraw his eyes from Rudolph's. The Schoolmaster's countenance is ghastly—he fears, he knows not what!

Deep silence reigns without—nought is heard but the melancholy rain as it falls from roof to pavement, with dull, monotonous splash.

Rudolph addressed the Schoolmaster: "Escaped from the Rochefort hulks, to which you were sentenced for life for forgery, robbery, and murder, you are Anselm Duresnel."

"A lie!" said the Schoolmaster, in a broken voice, and casting wild, uneasy glances around.

"You are Anselm Duresnel: and you murdered and robbed a cattle-dealer on the road to Poissy."

"A lie!"

"You will be more tractable by-and-bye."

The ruffian looked at Rudolph with surprise.

"This night you entered here to commit a robbery, and you stabbed the master of this house."

"And you put up the crack for me!" said the Schoolmaster, recovering some of his assurance. "He attacked me, I defended myself."

"The man whom you stabbed did not attack you—he was unarmed. I did propose this robbery to you, that much is true—I will presently tell you with what object. The night before last, after having robbed a man and woman in the City, you offered them yourself to kill me for a thousand francs."

"I heard him!" said the Slasher.

The Schoolmaster darted at him a glance of ferocious hatred.

Rudolph resumed: "You see you had no need of my temptation to incite you to crime."

"You are not my judge, and I will answer you no more."

"Now you shall hear why I proposed this robbery to you. I knew you were an escaped convict; I knew that you could reveal the parents of the unfortunate girl, almost every one of whose misfortunes have originated with your accomplice the Screech-Owl. I wished to bring you here by the temptation of a booty, because that was the only bait that could seduce you. Once in my power, I should have left you the choice of being replaced in the grasp of justice, which would have made you pay with your head for the cattle-dealer murder."

"It is false! I did not commit that crime."

"Or of being escorted out of France, under my direction, to a place of perpetual seclusion where your lot would have been less painful than at the hulks; but this relaxation of punishment would only have been granted on condition of your giving me the information which I desired. Condemned for life, you broke jail; by seizing you, and placing it hereafter beyond your power to do evil, I serve society; while by your disclosures I might, perhaps, be enabled to restore to her family a poor creature still more unfortunate than guilty. Such was my original intention—it was not legal: but your escape and your subsequent crimes have completely outlawed you. Yesterday, a providential discovery re-revealed to me that you are Anselm Duresnel— "

"It is false! I am not Duresnel."

Rudolph took from the table the Owl's chain, and showing the Schoolmaster the little lapis-lazuli dove, exclaimed, in a loud and stern tone: "Impious wretch! you have prostituted this sacred relic to an infamous creature: thrice sacred, I say, for *your* child received this holy gift from *his* mother and *her* mother!"

The Schoolmaster, stupified by this discovery, bowed his head, but replied not.

"You carried off your son from his mother fifteen years ago; you alone possess the secret of his existence. Had I not then a strong additional motive for securing you when I had detected who you were? I desire not to avenge myself for my individual wrongs. This night you have again shed blood without provocation. The man whom you have, perhaps, assassinated came to you with confidence, unsuspicious of your blood-thirstiness. He asked you what you wanted: 'Your money or your life!' and you stabbed him with your dagger."

"Such was the account given by M. Murphy, when I first came to his assistance," said the doctor.

"It's false! he lied!"

"Murphy never lies," said Rudolph, coldly. "Your crimes demand a signal expiation. You entered this garden forcibly—you stabbed a man that you might rob him: you have committed another murder. You ought to die here. But pity, respect for your wife and son, shall save you from the disgrace of the scaffold. It will be said that you were killed in an armed resistance to your attack. Prepare yourself—the instruments for your punishment are ready!"

The speaker's countenance was relentless. The Schoolmaster had noticed, stationed in

an adjoining room, two men armed with rifles. His name too was known! He concluded they were going to despatch him privately, that his later crimes might be buried in obscurity, and his family spared this additional shame. As is common with such people, this wretch was as cowardly as he was ferocious. Believing his hour was come, he trembled, and whimpered "Mercy!"

"There is no mercy for you," said Rudolph. "If your brains are not blown out here, the scaffold awaits you——"

"I prefer the scaffold—I shall live, at least, two or three months longer. What harm will that do to you, as I shall be punished at last? Mercy! mercy!"

"But your wife—your son? they bear your name——"

"My name is already dishonoured. Let me live, though only for a week! it will be merciful!"

"Not even that contempt of life which is sometimes found in the greatest criminals!" said Rudolph, with disgust.

"Besides, the law forbids anyone to take justice into his own hands," said the Schoolmaster, with hardihood.

"The law!" exclaimed Rudolph, "the law? Do *you* dare to invoke the law? you, who have always lived in open and armed revolt against society?"

The ruffian bowed his head, but answered not. At length he added, in a more humble tone: "At least, for pity's sake, spare my life!"

"Will you tell me where your son is?"

"Yes, yes, I will tell you all I know of him."

"Will you tell me who are the parents of that young girl whose childhood was made miserable by the Screech-Owl?"

"There are papers in my wallet which will enable you to trace the persons who delivered her to the Owl."

"Where is your son?"

"Will you let me live?"

"Confess all first."

"But—when I have told you all—" said the Schoolmaster, hesitating.

"You have killed him!"

"No, no! I have confided him to one of my accomplices, who, when I was taken, succeeded in making his escape."

"What did he do with him?"

"He brought him up; he gave him the necessary education for taking a situation in a banking-house at Nantes, in order that he might give us information, gain the confidence of the banker, and thus forward our projects. Although at Rochefort, waiting for an opportunity to effect my escape, I directed the details of this enterprise: for I and my friend corresponded in cypher——"

"Oh, my God! his son! his child! This man appals me!" cried the horror-struck Rudolph, burying his head in his hands.

"But we intended nothing more than forgery," exclaimed the ruffian; "besides, when my son learned what was expected of him he became indignant, revealed all to his employer, and quitted Nantes. You will find in my pocket-book an account of the steps taken to discover traces of him. The last house where he lived was the Rue du Temple, where he passed by the name of François Germain: the exact address is also in my pocket-book. You see I have told you all: I have kept back nothing. Now, keep your promise, and cause me to be arrested for the burglary of this night only."

"And the Poissy cattle-dealer?"

"It is impossible for that to be discovered—there are no proofs. I own it to *you*, in proof of my good faith, but before a judge I would plead not guilty."

"You confess it, then?"

"I was in distress; I was without means of supporting life—it was the Owl who urged me to the deed. I now repent, or I should not confess it. Oh! if you will be so generous as not to give me up to justice, I will give you my word of honour that I will never again perpetrate a crime!"

"You shall live, and I will not deliver you into the hands of the law."

"Will you pardon me?" exclaimed the Schoolmaster, scarcely believing what he heard, "will you forgive me?"

"I judge you and I will punish you!" cried Rudolph, in a solemn voice. "I will not surrender you to the law because that would merely transfer you to the galleys or the scaffold, which must not be for many reasons. The galleys would but open a new field for the exercise of your herculean strength and villany: that would be only giving scope to your brutal instincts of oppression: you would again become an object of horror or of dread—for even crime has its ambition, and you rejoice in your infamous leadership. The galleys! no, no; your iron frame alike defies the labours of the chain-gang and the lash of the taskmaster. And as the weightiest chains may be broken, the thickest walls pierced through—ramparts scaled—you may one day break loose and throw yourself upon society, like some infuriated beast, marking your passage with rapine and bloodshed—for none would be safe from your strength, and the sharpness of your knife. Therefore, this must not be; nay, it shall not. And since the galleys cannot hold you—what shall be done to protect mankind from your savage violence? Must you then be delivered up to the executioner?"

"Then, it is my death you still seek?" cried the ruffian. "My death!"

"Nay, hope it not! for, in your greediness to live, you would escape the dreadful agonies of punishment by some hope of evasion! A senseless, stupid expectation, granted, yet it would veil the horrors of your penalty. You are the man who does not believe in death till the cap is over your head! Perhaps then, drunk with affright, you would be merely an

inert mass offered as a holocaust to the manes of your victims. This ought not, shall not be, I tell you! No, no! Unless you repent—I would sever you from all hope in this life!"

"What have I done to this man? who is he? what would he have of me? Where am I? Oh——" screamed the Schoolmaster, in almost delirious tones.

Rudolph continued: "If, on the other hand, you had boldly met your fate, as little would it have induced me to surrender you to death. For you, the scaffold would then have been but an ensanguined stage, where, like so many others, you would have made a parade of your ferocity; where, reckless of a miserable life, you would have given up the ghost, loaded with your latest curse! Neither would that have been your due. 'Tis no example for the rabble to see the criminal cracking jokes with Jack Ketch, and rendering back with a sneer the divine spark which the Creator hath breathed into us. There is an awful sanctity enshrines the welfare of a soul. All crime may be expiated and redeemed, says the Saviour: but from the tribunal to the scaffold, the journey is too short; time is needful for expiation and repentance. That time thou shalt have: and may heaven let you profit by it!"

The Schoolmaster was overwhelmed. For the first time in his life, he felt that there was something he feared still more than death. This vague dread was horrible.

Rudolph continued: "Anselm Duresnel, you shall not be sent to the galleys, you shall not be put to death."

"What, then, do you mean to do to me? Are you sent from hell to——?"

"Listen!" said Rudolph, rising and throwing a menacing authority into his gesture: "you have criminally abused your vast strength—I will paralyse that strength; the most powerful have trembled before you—you shall tremble before the weakest. Assassin! you have plunged heavenly creatures into eternal night—the shadows of night eternal shall commence for you even in this world. Aye, even now—in a few minutes. Your punishment, though long delayed, shall equal your offences. But," added Rudolph, in an accent of mournful pity, "this terrible punishment will leave you a long future for repentance. I should be as criminal as you, if, in punishing you, I merely gratified revenge, however just that revenge might be. Far from being barren as death, your punishment may be fruitful; far from losing you for ever, it may redeem you. If, to render you henceforth incapable of injuring others, I for ever deprive you of all the splendours of creation—if I plunge you into impenetrable night—lonely night—with the memory of your many and mighty crimes upon your soul, it is that you may unceasingly reflect upon their enormity. Yes! shut in for ever from the external world, you will be driven to look inward; and then I hope that brow, now bronzed by infamy, will blush with shame, and your soul, cankered with crime, will be softened by confession. Each of your words is now a blasphemy—each of your words will be a prayer. You are bold and cruel, because you are strong—you will be mild and humble, because you will be weak. Your heart is closed against repentance—one day you will weep for your victims. You have degraded the intellect with which God endowed you, you have debased it to the mere instinct of plunder and assassination; from a man, you have descended to a wild beast! One day, your intellect will be purified by remorse, reclaimed by expiation. You have not even regarded those ties which the most furious of brutes regard—their female and their little ones. After a long life, devoted to the expiation of your crimes, your last prayer shall be a supplication to the Almighty to grant you the happiness of dying in the presence of your wife and son."

As he uttered these last words, Rudolph's voice quavered with excessive emotion.

The Schoolmaster's alarm had faded now; he fancied that his judge had merely wished to terrify him before he read him this moral discourse. Almost reassured by the mild accent of Rudolph, the ruffian, whose insolence augmented as his fear decreased, said, with a course laugh: "Oh, ho! unriddle us this riddle. Whereabouts are we in our catechism now?"

Instead of replying, Rudolph said to the doctor, "Proceed, David! And may the Almighty hold me alone accountable if I do wrong!"

The negro rang. Two men entered. David made a sign towards the side-door of an adjoining closet. They rolled in the chair, in which the Schoolmaster remained bound, incapable of the smallest movement.

"You are going to murder me, then? Mercy! mercy!" cried the Schoolmaster, as they wheeled him out.

"Gag him!" said the negro, entering the closet.

Rudolph and the Slasher were left alone.

"M Rudolph," said the Slasher, pale, and trembling as he spoke.—"M. Rudolph, pray speak to me! I feel frightened. I must be dreaming. What is it they're at with the Schoolmaster? He does not cry now—all is so silent that it makes me worse!"

David came out of the cabinet; his countenance had that livid hue peculiar to negroes, his lips were ashy white.

The two men now wheeled back the Schoolmaster, still bound in the chair.

"Remove the gag and unbind him!" exclaimed David.

There was a moment of fearful silence. The two men loosened the cords with which the Schoolmaster was bound, then took the bandage from his eyes. He sprung up suddenly; his hideous countenance expressing rage, terror, and alarm. He advanced one

step, groped with out-spread hands before him—then, falling back into his chair, he raised his hands to heaven, and cried with inexpressible agony and desperate fury, "I am blind!"

"David, give him this pocket-book," said Rudolph.

The negro placed a small pocket-book in the trembling hands of the Schoolmaster, and said: "In this pocket-book there is money enough to provide you with an asylum and the means of living in some retired spot for the rest of your days. You are now free! Go, repent! the Lord be merciful!"

"Blind!" repeated the Schoolmaster, mechanically grasping the pocket-book.

"Open the door; let him go!" said Rudolph. The doors were loudly thrown open.

"Blind! blind!" shrieked the ruffian, half-crazed.

"You are free—you have money—go!"

"Go! I cannot go! I cannot see a step. Oh! it is a frightful crime, thus to abuse your strength—to——"

"It *is* a crime to abuse one's strength, "reiterated Rudolph, in a solemn voice. "What hast thou done with thy strength?"

"Oh, death! give me death! Yes! I should have preferred death!" cried the Schoolmaster. To be at every one's mercy, to—fear everything! A child might beat me now! My God! my God! what will become of me?"

"You have money."

"If it be stolen!" cried the ruffian.

"*You* will be robbed! Do you understand the words you utter so fearfully? You, who have robbed so many? Go!"

"For the love of heaven," said the Schoolmaster, with a suppliant air, "let some one lead me! How shall I find my way in the streets? Oh! kill me! I pray you, for mercy's sake, kill me!"

"No; hereafter you will repent."

"Never! I will never repent!" cried the Schoolmaster, in a paroxysm of passion. "Oh, I will revenge myself; yes, terribly will I revenge myself!"

He sprang from the arm-chair, gnashing his teeth, and menacing the spectators with his clenched fists. At the very first step he stumbled.

"No, no, no! I cannot, I am helpless! And yet—and yet I am so strong! Oh! woe is me! Nobody pities me! alas, there is no one!"

The affright and wonderment of the Slasher during this terrible scene were indescribable; his rough and wild countenance expressed the deepest compassion. He drew near Rudolph, and said to him in a low tone, "M. Rudolph, this is no more than he deserves! He was a horrid villian, no doubt. He also wanted to kill me a little while ago; but now he is blind and weeping. He does not know how to go; he will get run over in the street. With your leave, I'll lead him to some place where he can at least be quiet?"

"Good!" said Rudolph, moved by this generosity, and grasping the speaker's hand. "Do as you please: go!"

The Slasher approached the Schoolmaster, and laid his hand on his shoulder. The ruffian trembled.

"Who touches me?" said he, in a hoarse voice.

"Me."

"Who is it?"

"The Slasher."

"And you also are come to avenge yourself? Say, is't not so?"

"You can't see to go by yourself; take my arm; I will lead you."

"You, you!"

"Yes; it pains me to see you—now. Come along."

"You want to lead me into some snare?"

"I am no coward, you know. I shall not take advantage of your misery. Come, let us be off; it is daylight."

"Daylight!—Oh, I shall never see daylight more!" groaned the Schoolmaster.

Rudolph could no longer endure this scene, he therefore retired suddenly, followed by David, dismissing by a sign the two domestics. The Slasher and the Schoolmaster remained alone.

"Is it true that there is money in the pocket-book which they have given me?" asked the ruffian, after a long silence.

"Yes; I myself put five thousand francs into it. With that sum you can place yourself as a boarder somewhere, in some corner of the country, for the rest of your days; or would you rather have me lead you to the Ogress?"

"She would rob me."

"To Red Arm?"

"He would poison me, to plunder me more safely."

"Where, then, would you like to be taken?"

"I do not know. Happily, you are no thief, Slasher; here, hide my pocket-book beneath my waistcoat, so that the Owl cannot see it: she would strip me of every farthing."

"The Owl? They have carried her to Beaujon Hospital. While I struggled with the pair of you last night, I put out one of her legs."

"But what a future! My God, what *is* to become of me, with that black curtain—there! there! eternally before my eyes? Oh! and if upon this black curtain I should see the white and corpse-like features of those——"

He shuddered, then in a low and hollow tone, he said—

"The man—of this night—is he dead?"

"No."

"So much the better."

And again the ruffian was silent: then suddenly stamping with rage, he broke forth:

"Yet, after all, 'twas you, Slasher, who caused me this evil. But for you I should

have slain the man, and carried off the money. If I am blind, that too is through you."

"Don't think any more of that; it won't be good for your health. Now, then, will you come—aye or no! I am tired and want to go to sleep. I have had enough for one night's entertainment. To-morrow I return to my timber rafts. First, I will lead you wherever you like to go, and then I'll be off to bed."

"But I know not where to go. To my lodging!—No, I dare not—I must tell them——"

"Well, listen to me. Suppose, for a day or two, you come to my kennel. Perhaps I can find some decent people, who, not knowing who you are, will take you in to board and lodge with them as a helpless man. And, now I think of it, I know a man at Port Saint Nicholas, whose mother lives at Saint Mande, a worthy woman, who is not over well off. Shouldn't wonder if she may be willing to take charge of you. Will you come—yes or no?"

"I can trust you, Slasher. I am not afraid to go with you with my money. You have never stolen, how fortunate!"

"And got jolly well rowed, because I would not become a 'frisk thimbles,' like you."

"Oh! who could foresee——"

"If I had listened to you, you would just now have your clies (pockets) swept out of all your cash."

"That's true; but you have neither rancour nor hate," said the bully, humbly; "you are better, far better than I."

"S'help me Bob! I *should* think so! M. Rudolph told me that I had heart and honour."

"But who, then, is that man? He's not a man!" cried the Schoolmaster, again bursting into bitter rage. "He is a monster!"

The Slasher snapped his fingers, and said—"There, you are firing up again. Shall we start?"

"We will go to your home; say, Slasher?"

"Yes."

"You bear no grudge on account of last night? You will swear that to me, will you not?"

"I swear it."

"And you are sure that *that man* is not dead?"

"I am quite sure."

"That will be one the less to answer for," muttered the ruffian to himself. "If they only knew—And the little old man of the Rue du Roule—and that woman—in the Canal Saint Martin. Oh! now I can only think of all that! I am blind, oh, God! blind!" added the wretch, aloud. Leaning on the Slasher's arm, he slowly left the house in the Allée des Veuves.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ISLE-ADAM.

A MONTH has elapsed since the events which we have just related. We will now lead the reader into the little town of Isle-Adam, situated in a delightful spot, on the bank of the Oise, on the skirt of a forest.

In the country, the most trivial things become mighty events. The idlers of Isle-Adam, therefore, who, on the morning of which we speak, sauntered on the green in front of the church, occupied themselves eagerly in endeavouring to find out the time when the purchaser of the most eligible butcher's shop in that town might be expected to arrive to take possession of his premises, which were situated in the main street, opposite the church.

One of these idlers, more curious than the rest, resolved to question the butcher lad, who, with an open and joyous countenance, was actively engaged in making the final arrangements of the establishment. The lad, questioned about his master, replied that he did not as yet know the new proprietor, he having purchased the business through an agent.

Shortly after, two persons, coming from Paris, alighted from a cab at the shop door. One of these was Murphy, completely recovered from his wound, the other was the Slasher.

At the risk of repeating a trite remark, we will observe that the sway of dress is so powerful that the guest of the foul doggeries of the City was scarcely recognizable under the garments he now wore. His features had undergone a like change; he had laid aside with his rags his savage, brutal, and turbulent air; and to see him walking with his hands in the pockets of his long and warm great-coat of walnut-brown broad-cloth, one would have taken him for the most inoffensive, steady-going tradesman in the world.

"'Faith, my boy, the way was long, and the cold sharp; were they not?"

"Indeed, that's more than I discovered, M. Murphy; I am too jolly, and joy warms me. When I say content, perhaps——"

"What then?"

"Yesterday you came to look for me at Port Saint Nicholas, where I was boat-hooking in the logs like sixty, by way of warming myself. I had not seen you since the night—that night when the white-haired negro blinded the Schoolmaster. 'Twas the first time he ever missed fire at a robbery, the scoundrel! But it give me such a turn. And M. Rudolph, what a countenance! he who generally looks so soft, not to say swell-covish! I was frightened at the moment——"

"Well, go on."

"You said to me: 'Good day, Slasher!' 'Good day, M. Murphy,' said I: 'what, you are about again! So much the better, thun-

than me. One of the inspectresses of the other quarter of Saint Lazare, destined for those accused of other crimes, will interest you much more. She related to me the arrival, this morning, of a young girl, accused of infanticide. Never have I heard anything more touching. The father of the poor unfortunate has become insane from grief, on learning the shame of his child. It appears that nothing could be more frightful than the poverty of this family, who lived in a wretched garret in the Rue du Temple!"

"The Rue du Temple!" cried Madam d'Harville, astonished. "What is the name of the family?"

"Morel. Her name is Louise Morel."

"This poor family has been recommended to me," said Clemence, blushing, "but I was far from expecting to hear such terrible news —and Louise Morel"—

"Says she is innocent; she swears her child was dead; and her words have the accent of truth. Since you have interested yourself in her family, if you would have the kindness to see her, this mark of your goodness would calm her despair, which they say is fearful."

"Certainly, I will see her, and the Goualeuse also; for all you tell me about this poor girl affects me sincerely. But what must I do to obtain her liberty? Then I will find her a place; I will take charge of her."

"With the relations your ladyship has, it will be very easy for you to get her discharge to-day or to-morrow; it depends entirely on the prefect of the police. The recommendation of a person of quality would be decisive with him. But I have wandered far, madam, from the observation that I made on the slumber of the Goualeuse. On this subject, I must confess, that I should not be astonished that, to the sentiments of profound grief for her first fault, is joined another sorrow, not less cruel."

"What do you mean to say, madam?"

"Perhaps I am deceived; but I should not be astonished that this young girl, emancipated, as it were, from the degradation into which she was first plunged, had experienced perhaps a virtuous love, which was at once her happiness and misery."

"Why do you think so?"

"The obstinate silence she keeps as to the place where she passed the three months which followed her departure from the City, makes me think that she fears to be reclaimed by the persons with whom, perhaps, she found a refuge."

"And why this fear?"

"Because she would then have to avow a past life, of which they are doubtless ignorant."

"Really, this peasant's dress"—

"Besides, another circumstance has strengthened my suspicions. Last night, as I made my inspection, I drew near the Goualeuse's bed; she slept profoundly; her face was calm and serene; her thick flaxen hair, half escaping from under her cap, fell in profusion on her neck and shoulders. She had her small hands clasped over her bosom, as if she had fallen asleep while in the act of prayer. I contemplated with compassion this angelic countenance, when, in a low voice, and in a tone at once respectful, sorrowful, and endearing, she pronounced a name."

"And this name?"

After a moment's silence, Madam Armand said gravely, "Although I consider as sacred that which one hears another express in their sleep, you interest yourself so generously in this unfortunate, madam, that I can confide to you this secret. The name was Rudolph."

"Rudolph!" cried Madam d'Harville, thinking of the prince. Then, reflecting that, after all, the Grand Duke of Gerolstein could have no connection with the Rudolph of poor Goualeuse, she said to the inspectress, who seemed astonished at her exclamation, "this name surprised me, madam, for by a singular chance, one of my relations bears it also; but all you have told me of the Goualeuse interests me more and more. Can I not see her to-day? Now?"

"Yes, madam, I will go, if you wish, to find her. I can also ask about Louise Morel, who is in the other part of the prison."

"I shall be much obliged," answered Madam d'Harville, and she remained alone.

"It is singular," said she; "I cannot account for the strange impression which the name of Rudolph caused me. Truly, I am mad! between *him* and such a creature, what relations can exist?" Then, after a pause, she added, "He was right! how much all this interests me! the mind, the heart, expands when they are applied to such noble occupations! As he says, it seems as if one participated in the power of Providence, when relieving those who are deserving. And these excursions in a world of whose existence we have no suspicion, are so interesting, so *amusing*, as *he* was pleased to say! What romance could give me such touching emotions, excite to this point my curiosity! This poor Goualeuse, for example, inspires me with profound pity; and this unfortunate daughter of the artisan, whom the prince had so generously relieved in my name! Poor people! their frightful misery served as a pretext to save me. I have escaped shame, death, perhaps, by a hypocritical falsehood; this deceit oppresses me; but I will expatiate it by force of benefactions. This will be easy! it is so sweet to follow the noble counsels of Rudolph! it is rather to love than to obey him! Oh! I feel it—I know it. I experience a sweet delight in acting through him; for I love him. Oh, yes, I love him! yet he will be for ever ignorant of this eternal passion of my life." While Madam d'Harville awaits the Goualeuse, we will return to the prison-yard.

CHAPTER XVI.

WOLF AND LAMB.

FLEUR DE MARIE, the Songstress, wore the blue dress and black cap of the prisoners; but even in this common costume, she was charming. Yet since she was carried off from the farm of Bouqueval, her features were much altered; her natural paleness, slightly tinted with rose, was now as dead as the whitest alabaster; her expression had also changed; it had now assumed a kind of dignified sadness. Fleur de Marie knew that to endure courageously the grievous sacrifices of expiation is almost to obtain a kind of regeneration.

"Ask their pardon for me, La Goualeuse," said Mont Saint Jean. "See how they drag in the dirt all that I had collected with so much trouble; what good can it do them?"

Fleur de Marie did not say a word, but she began actively to collect, one by one, from under the feet of the prisoners, all the rags she could find. One of the prisoners retaining mischievously under her foot a piece of coarse muslin, Fleur de Marie stooping, raised her enchanting face towards this woman, and said, in her sweet voice, "I beg you to let me take this, in the name of the poor weeping woman."

The prisoner withdrew her foot. The muslin was saved, as well as all the other rags, which the Goualeuse secured piece by piece. There remained only one little cap, which two of them were contending for, laughing.

Fleur de Marie said to them, "Come, be good now, and give her that little cap."

"My eye! is it for a baby harlequin, this cap? made of gray stuff, with peaks of green and black fustian, and a bedtick lining." This description of the cap was received with shouts of laughter.

"Laugh at it as much as you please, but give it to me," said Mont Saint Jean; "don't drag it in the gutter as you did the rest. I beg your pardon, La Goualeuse, for having made you soil your hands for me," added she, in a grateful voice.

"Give me the harlequin cap?" said La Louve, who caught it, and shook it in the air as a trophy.

"I entreat you to give it to me?" said La Goualeuse.

"No; because you will give it to Mont Saint Jean."

"Certainly!"

"Ah! Bah! such a fag! its not worth the trouble."

"It is because Mont Saint Jean has nothing but rags to dress her child with, that you should have pity on her, La Louve," said Fleur de Marie, sadly, extending her hand towards the cap.

"You shan't have it!" answered La Louve, brutally; "must one always give up to you, because you are the weakest? You take advantage of this!"

"Where would be the merit of giving it to me if I were the strongest?" answered La Goualeuse, with a smile full of grace.

"No, no, you wish to twist me about again with your little soft voice; you shan't have it!"

"Come, now, La Louve, don't be naughty."

"Leave me alone, you tire me."

"I entreat you!"

"Stop! don't make me angry—I have said no, and no it is!" cried La Louve, very much irritated.

"Have pity upon her; see how she weeps?"

"What is that to me? so much the worse for her! she is our target."

"That's true, that's true, don't give it up," murmured several of the prisoners, carried away by the example of La Louve."

"You are right—so much the worse for her!" said Fleur de Marie, with bitterness; "she is your butt; she ought to be resigned to it; her groans amuse you, her tears make you laugh; you must pass the time in some way! if you should kill her on the spot, she has no right to say anything. You are right, La Louve—it is just! this poor woman has done no harm; she cannot defend herself; she is one against the whole—you overpower her—that is very brave and very generous."

"Are we cowards, then?" cried La Louve, carried away by the violence of her character, and by her impatience of all contradiction; "will you answer? are we cowards, eh?" said she, more and more irritated.

Murmurs, very threatening for the Goualeuse, began to be heard. The offended prisoners approached and surrounded her, vociferating, forgetting or revolting against the ascendancy that the young girl had until then obtained over them.

"She calls us cowards! By what right does she scold us? Is it because she is greater than we are? We have been too good to her, and now she wants to put on airs with us. If we choose to torment Mont Saint Jean, what has she got to say about it? Since it is so, you shall be worse beaten than before, do you hear, Mont Saint Jean?"

"Hold, here is one to begin with," said one of them, giving her a blow. "And if you meddle with what don't concern you, La Goualeuse, we'll treat you in the same way."

"Yes, yes!"

"This isn't all!" cried La Louve; "La Goualeuse must ask our pardon for having called us cowards! If not, and we let her go on, she'll finish by eating us up; we are very stupid not to see that! She must ask our pardon. On her knee! on both knees! or we'll treat her like Mont Saint Jean, her *protégée*. On your knees—on your knees! Oh! we are cowards, are we?"

Fleur de Marie was not alarmed at these furious cries; she let the storm rage, but as soon as she could be heard, casting a calm and melancholy glance around her, she re-

from his seat, "you offer me this house, and a large sum of money, to tempt me; but—I cannot take them. I never robbed in my life. It is perhaps to kill; but I have had my dose of the sergeant dream," added the Slasher, in a hoarse voice.

"Alas, for the unfortunate!" cried Rudolph, bitterly; "so rarely is compassion shown to them that they can only understand liberality as the temptation and the reward of crime."

Then, addressing the Slasher, he said to him, in a voice of exceeding mildness: "You both do me injustice, and deceive yourself. I never shall ask anything of you but what is honourable; what I give to you, I give because you deserve it."

"*I!*" said the Slasher, whose swimming of the head began to return, "I merit it—and how?"

"I will tell you. Deserted in infancy, ere you had learnt to distinguish good from evil, abandoned to your animal instincts, confined for fifteen years in penal servitude, among the most frightful ruffians, tempted by misery and hunger, forced by your disgrace and by the reprobation of honest men to frequent the resorts of malefactors—not only did you remain honest, but remorse for your crime survived even the severe retribution with which human justice visited you."

This simple and noble speech was a source of new wonder to the hearer. He gazed on Rudolph with a respect mingled with awe and gratitude: yet, even now he could not realize his true position.

"How, M. Rudolph," said he, "because you thrashed me—because I—fancying you a mere working-man like myself—because you spoke slang like a benculi—because I told you the story of my life over a couple of glasses of wine, and afterwards saved you from being drowned—you give me a house—money!—I shall be a regular shopkeeper! Forgive me, M. Rudolph—but all this can't be true!"

"Believing me like yourself, you told me the story of your life naturally, and without disguise; you neither concealed what was culpable nor what was generous. I judged you, judged well of you, and it pleases me to reward you."

"But, M. Rudolph, this can't be. No; there are many poor hard-working men who ave been honest all their lives, and who——"

"I know it, and perhaps I have done for many of them still more than I have done for you. But if the man who lives honestly in the society of honest men, stimulated by their esteem, deserves patronage and support, he who, despite the absence of good example, preserves his integrity among the most abominable scamps upon the face of the earth, deserves likewise reward. But this is not all. You have saved my life—you have also saved the life of Murphy, the dearest friend I possess. What I do for you is, therefore, dictated as much by personal gratitude, as by the desire to save from pollution a kindly and noble nature, which has gone astray, but not got lost. Nor is that all."

"What else have I done, M. Rudolph?"

Rudolph cordially grasped the Slasher's hand, and said to him, "Moved with compassion for the misfortune of a man who, but a short time before had sought your life, you offered him support; you even gave him an asylum in your own poor abode. Number 9, in the blind alley by Notre Dame."

"You know where I live, M. Rudolph!"

"It is because you forgot the services you had rendered me, that I remembered them. When you left my house you were followed; you were seen to enter there with the Schoolmaster."

"But M. Murphy told me that you did not know where I lived, M. Rudolph."

"I wished to subject you to a last trial—I wished to know if you united disinterestedness with generosity; and I found that, after your courageous action, you returned to your severe daily labour, asking nothing, hoping nothing, not uttering even a word of bitterness as to the apparent ingratitude with which your services were repaid; and when Murphy, yesterday, proposed to you an employment a little better paid than your usual work, you accepted it with joy and gratitude."

"Listen, M. Rudolph, as far as that goes, four francs a day are always four francs a day. As for the service I did you, it is rather I who ought to be thankful."

"How so?"

"Yes, yes, M. Rudolph," said the Slasher, with a serious voice, "for you have given me good thoughts. Since I first met you, and you said those words to me, 'You have a heart and honour,' it is astonishing how I have reflected. And it is strange that two words, two only, should produce such an effect. But, so it is, sow two grains in the ground, and though they look so small, yet they will grow up into stalks ever so tall!"

This just and almost poetical comparison struck Rudolph. In fact, two words, but words of transcendant power for those souls which can feel their force, had almost instantaneously developed in that energetic nature the generous instincts which there had existed in germ.

"It was you who lodged the Schoolmaster at Saint Mandé?" continued Rudolph.

"Yes, M. Rudolph. He got me to exchange his notes for gold, and buy him a belt, which I sewed round him; into that belt we put his *rhino*, and good-bye! He boards at thirty sous per day, with some worthy people, to whom that sum is a little fortune. When I have time to leave my floated wood, I'll go and see how he gets on."

"Your rafts! But you forget your shop, and that this is your home!"

"See you, M. Rudolph, don't make a jest of a poor devil any more; you have already

tried me, as you call it, quite enough. 'My house! and *my* shop!' that's only a song to the same old tune. You have said to yourself: 'Let us see if this animal, the Slasher, will be snob enough to think that I have set him down to such a feast——' It's gone quite far enough—quite, M. Rudolph—you are a merry gentleman, but spare me the rest!" He laughed long, loud, and heartily.

"But once more believe me——"

"If I were to believe that you would give me a fortune for nothing at all, you would certainly say—'Poor Slasher, I'm sorry for you; are you sure you don't want medicine?'"

Rudolph began to find himself puzzled how to convince the Slasher; so he said to him in an impressive and almost severe tone—"I never jest with the gratitude and interest with which noble conduct inspires me. As I have already said, this house and this business is yours—if they suit you—for the bargain is conditional. I swear to you, on my honour, that all this belongs to you, and that I give it to you solely for the reasons I have already mentioned."

By this speech, delivered in a firm and dignified tone, and the serious expression of Rudolph's countenance, the Slasher's doubts were dispelled. For some moments he looked at his benefactor in silence; then said in a voice of deep emotion—"I believe you, my lord, and I heartily thank you. A poor man like me cannot make fine speeches; but, once more, I heartily thank you. All that I can promise is—d'ye see—that I never will refuse succour to the unfortunate, because Hunger and Misery are owls of the same feather as seized on poor Goualeuse; and when once a poor devil is in the mire, it is not every one that has *muckle* (muscle) enough to drag him out again."

"You could not show your gratitude more strongly, my lad, than in speaking to me thus."

"All the better, for I would be puzzled to give your highness any other proof of it."

"And now, let us go and look over your establishment; Murphy has had that pleasure, and I should like to have the same."

Rudolph and the Slasher went downstairs. Just as they got into the court-yard, the lad respectfully addressing the Slasher, said to him: "As you are my master, sir, I come to tell you that customers are waiting. We are out of chops and legs, and we must stick a sheep or two directly."

"By George!" said Rudolph, "here's a fine opening to display your ability. I should like to give you handsel. The fresh air has given me an appetite, and I will taste your chops."

"You are very good, M. Rudolph," said the Slasher, joyfully; "you flatter me: I will do my best."

"Shall I take two sheep into the slaughter-house master," asked the lad.

"Yes, and bring a sharp-pointed knife; not too fine at the edge, and with a stout back."

"I have just the thing for you, master—one that you might shave with. Here it is."

"Thunderation, M. Rudolph!" said the Slasher, throwing off his coat, rolling up his shirt-sleeves, and exhibiting his athletic arms, "this brings back my youth and the knacker's-yard. You shall see how I shall go to work. Name of names! how I long to be at it! Your knife, lad—the knife! Oh, that's the tool; I see you know your trade. Here's a blade! What need a man wish better? Thunder! With such a slasher as this I could slaughter a mad bull!"

The Slasher brandished the knife. His eyes rapidly became bloodshot: the brute was getting the upper hand of his better nature; the instinct, the thirst for blood, awoke in all its frightful energy.

The slaughter-house was in the yard; it was a vaulted room, flagged, and lighted by a narrow opening at the top.

The lad brought a sheep to the door, and said: "Shall I tie it to the ring, master?"

"Tie it! What's a man got knees for? Be quiet, I'll fix him between my legs like a vice. Give me the beast, and you go and mind shop."

The lad retired; Rudolph stayed and watched the Slasher with attention, almost with anxiety.

"Now, then, to work," said he.

"Ay, and quickly too! Thunder! You shall soon see how I can handle a knife! My hands burn! I have a buzzing in my ears! my temples beat as when I *see red!* Come hither, woolly, till I slash you to death!"

His eyes flashed with a savage brightness; and, no longer observing the presence of Rudolph, the Slasher caught up the sheep without an effort, and with one bound rushed into the slaughter-house. He looked like some ferocious wolf retreating into a cave with his helpless prey.

Rudolph followed him, and leaned against one of the jambs of the door, which he shut. The slaughter-house was dark, but a bright ray of light falling directly down, illumined, as in Rembrandt's pictures, the harsh countenance of the Slasher, with his fair hair and red whiskers. Bent double, and holding the long gleaming knife in his teeth, he pulled the sheep between his knees. When he had fixed it helplessly, he held back its head, and cut its throat.

The moment the sheep felt the knife, it gave a low, soft bleat, and turned its dying gaze upon the Slasher. Two jets of blood spurted forth on the slayer's face.

That look, that cry, that blood, produced a dreadful effect on the man. The knife dropt from his hand; his countenance became livid, distorted, and hideous, beneath its covering of blood; his eyes dilated; his hair stood on

end; and, recoiling from his victim, he exclaimed: "Oh! the sergeant! the sergeant!"

Rudolph ran to his assistance. "Be yourself, my brave fellow."

"There! there! there's the sergeant!" repeated the Slasher, still recoiling, staring with fixed and haggard eye, and pointing with his finger at some invisible phantom. Then, uttering a fearful cry, as if the spectre had touched him, he rushed into the darkest corner of the slaughter-house, and there, pressing his breast, face, and arms against the wall, as if he would have forced himself through it, to fly from the horrible vision, he repeated in a hollow and agonized voice: "Oh! the sergeant! the sergeant! the sergeant!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE DEPARTURE.

THANKS to the assiduity of Murphy and Rudolph, who had great difficulty in calming his agitation, the Slasher was completely restored. He found himself alone with the prince, in an upper room of the house.

"Your highness," said he, humbly, "has been very kind to me; but, see you, I would prefer being a thousand times more wretched than I have ever been, to following the business of a butcher."

"You had better reflect; perhaps——"

"Oh, my lord, when I heard the cry of that poor beast, that could not defend itself—when I felt its blood spirt upon my face—the hot, life-blood—oh! you know not what that feeling is! Then again my dream came on me; that horrid vision of the sergeant and those poor young soldiers whom I slashed, who did not defend themselves; who, in dying, gazed at me with such a sad, forgiving look—a look which said they pitied me. Oh, my ord, it would drive me mad!" The wretched man buried his face in his hands, and shuddered convulsively.

"Come, come, calm yourself."

"Excuse me, my lord; but now the sight of blood—of a knife—I could not bear it. Every instant it would call up those dreams which I was beginning to forget. To have one's hands or feet in blood daily—cutting the throats of poor animals that do not resist oh! no, no! I cannot do it! I would rather be blind, like the Schoolmaster, than follow such a trade."

The energy of the Slasher's action, and his tone, and the expression of his countenance as he spoke thus were indescribable. Rudolph felt himself deeply moved. He was satisfied by the horrible impression which the sight of blood made upon the man. For an instant, the wild beast—the sanguinary instinct—had triumphed over the man in the heart of the Slasher; but remorse had speedily vanquished instinct. This was striking: it was a great moral lesson.

"Pardon me, my lord," resumed the Slasher, timidly; "I but ill repay your kindness to me, but——"

"By no means, my good fellow: I said to you: 'this bargain is conditional.' I chose the business of a butcher for you, because I thought your tastes—your instinct—would lead you to prefer it."

"Alas! my lord, that is true; but for what you know of, that trade would have been my delight; I was saying so to M. Murphy."

"Well, thinking it just possible that your inclination might not tend that way, I had thought of another arrangement. A person who possesses some extensive allotments in Algeria, will make over to me, for you, one of two extensive farms. The lands attached to them are extremely fertile, and in full cultivation; but I must not conceal from you that they are situated at the base of Mount Atlas—that is to say, at the furthermost outposts—and exposed to frequent Arab raids. There, it is necessary to be at least as much soldier as farmer; it is at once a fort and a farm. The man who has charge of the house, during the absence of the owner, will make you acquainted with all; he is, I learn, an honest and faithful man, and you will keep him with you as long as you need his services. Once established there, not only can you make your own fortune by labour and intelligence, but also render real service to the country by your valour. The colonists form a militia; the extent of your property, and the number of your dependents, will render you the chief of a large armed force. Animated by your courage, this force will be a safeguard to the property of the farmers scattered over that extended table-land. I repeat to you, the idea of this post pleases me, in spite of the danger; or rather because of the danger, as you will there find a favourable field for the display of your natural intrepidity; and because, having almost expiated your one great crime, your re-establishment in character will be more noble, more heroic, more perfect, if achieved amidst the perils of an unconquered land, than in the midst of the peaceful inhabitants of a little village. If I did not offer you this position at first, it was because it was probable that the other would satisfy you; and this, moreover, is so adventurous, that I would not offer it to you without giving you a choice. There is still time. If this establishment in Algeria does not suit you, say so, frankly, and we will seek some other. If it does, everything shall be signed to-morrow, and you will at once proceed to Algiers with a person appointed by the present proprietor to show you the farm, and put you in full possession of the property. Two years of rent are due, which you shall receive on your arrival. The land yields three thousand francs; work, improve the land, be active and industrious, and you will easily and rapidly promote your own fortune and that of the colonists, whom you will be

in a position to assist; for I doubt not that you will always be charitable, and remember that *to be rich—is to give much*. Although far from you, I shall not loose sight of you: and will never forget that I and my best friend owe our lives to you. The only proof of attachment and gratitude that I require is, that you will as soon as possible learn to read and write sufficiently to furnish me with a regular weekly account of your proceedings; and that you apply directly to me, if you should want either advice or assistance."

It is needless to describe the joyous transports of the Slasher. His character and impulses are sufficiently well known to the reader to give him to understand that no proposal could be more to his satisfaction.

The day following, the Slasher set out for Algeria.

CHAPTER XXI.

INQUIRIES.

THE house in the Allée des Veuves, owned by Rudolph, was not his usual place of residence. He kept one of the largest mansions in the Faubourg Saint Germain, situated at the end of the Rue Plumet, and the Boulevard des Invalides.

To avoid the honours due to his sovereign rank, the prince had preserved his incognito ever since his arrival in Paris; his *chargé d'affaires* having announced to the French government that his master would pay those visits which were absolutely indispensable, under the title of the *Comte de Duren*. Thanks to this common custom of the courts of the North, a prince travels with equal freedom and pleasure, and escapes the annoyance of punctilious ceremony. Notwithstanding his transparent incognito, Rudolph, as became him, lived in a magnificent manner. We now introduce our readers to his hotel in the Rue Plumet, on the morning after the Slasher's departure for Algeria.

Ten o'clock had just struck. In the centre of a spacious saloon, situated on the ground-floor, and next to Rudolph's study, Murphy, seated before a writing-desk, was busy sealing numerous despatches. An usher, dressed in black, and wearing a silver chain round his neck, threw open the folding-doors of the apartment, and announced, "His Excellency Baron Graun."

Murphy, without interrupting himself in his occupation, saluted the baron with a gesture at once familiar and cordial: "M. le Chargé d'Affaires," said he, smiling, "will you warm yourself? I will be at your service immediately."

"Mr. Private Secretary, I wait your orders," replied M. de Graun, gaily, as he made a friendly but very ceremonious bow to the other.

The baron was about fifty years of age; his hair was grey, curly, scanty, and slightly powdered. His chin, somewhat protruding, was half hidden by a high cravat of very thick muslin, and of a most dazzling whiteness. His countenance was full of shrewdness, his figure was aristocratic, and from beneath the glasses of his gold spectacles beamed a look equally satirical and penetrating. Although it was only ten in the morning, M. de Graun wore a black coat—etiquette required he should do so; a riband striped with several brilliant colours was in his button-hole. He placed his hat upon an arm-chair, and stood by the fire-place, while Murphy continued his occupation.

"His highness has doubtless been up part of the night, my dear Murphy, for your correspondence appears to me to be rather voluminous."

"His highness went to bed at about six this morning. Among other letters, he wrote one of eight pages to the Lord Chamberlain, and dictated to me an equally long one to the President of the Council of State, Prince of Herkausen-Oldenzaal, his royal highness's cousin."

"You know that his son, Prince Henry, has entered as lieutenant in the guards of his Majesty the Emperor of Austria?"

"Yes; his highness has recommended him warmly as his relation. He is a fine, brave young fellow, with cherubic look, and a heart of gold."

"The fact is, my dear Murphy, that if young Prince Henry had been introduced into the grand ducal abbey of Sainte Hermengilda, of which his auntis the superior, the poor nuns——"

"Upon my word, baron——"

"You take me then? ha! ha! 'tis the air of Paris—but let us talk seriously. Shall I wait the rising of his highness to communicate the information I bring?"

"No, my dear baron. His highness has ordered that he be not awaked till two or three in the afternoon; he wishes you to send off these despatches by special courier this morning, instead of waiting until Monday. You will confide to me the information you have collected, and I will repeat it when his highness arises; such are his commands."

"Indeed! His highness will be satisfied, I suspect, with what I have to tell him. But, my dear Murphy, I hope the sending off of this courier is not an evil augury? The last despatches I had the honour to transmit to his highness——"

"Announced that everything was going on admirably *yonder*, and it is precisely because his highness wishes to express his satisfaction, at the earliest possible moment, to the President of the State Council, Prince of Herkausen-Oldenzaal, that he desires you to expedite the despatches this very day."

"That is so like his highness. If it was a reprimand, he would not expedite it thus."

"And nothing new here, my dear baron? Has nothing been noised about? Our mysterious adventures——"

"Are completely unknown. Since the arrival of his highness in Paris, he has made a practice of appearing but seldom among the few persons to whom he has been presented: it is therefore supposed that he is extremely fond of privacy, that he makes frequent excursions in the neighbourhood of Paris. Consequently, with the exception of Countess Sarah Macgregor and her brother, no one is aware of the disguises assumed by his royal highness; and neither the countess nor her brother has the smallest interest in betraying the secret."

"Ah, my dear baron?" said Murphy, sighing, "what a pity that cursed countess is now a widow."

"Was she not married in 1827, or in '28?"

"In 1827, a short time after the death of that unfortunate little girl, who would now be sixteen or seventeen years old, and whose loss his highness daily laments."

"His sorrow is the more intelligible, as his royal highness has no children from his marriage."

"Besides, my dear baron, this may account for the deep interest his highness takes in poor Goualeuse, arising as it does from the fact that the daughter he so bitterly deplores would have been of the same age as this unfortunate girl."

"It seems really a fatality that Lady Sarah Macgregor, from whom one might have supposed him delivered for ever, should find herself a widow within eighteen months after his highness has lost the pattern of wives, after years of wedded happiness. The countess, I feel convinced, believes herself specially favoured by fate in the occurrence of this double widowhood."

"And her insensate hopes have sprung up more ardently than ever; yet, she well knows that his highness has the deepest and most fully-merited aversion to her. Did she not cause the death of his daughter by her indifference? Was she not the cause of—— Oh, baron!" said Murphy, leaving the sentence unfinished, "the coming of that woman casts a shadow before. Heaven grant that she may not presage further calamity!"

"But at the present time the views of the countess are absurd; the death of the poor little girl, of whom you just spoke, snapped the last tie which could attach his highness to that woman; she must be mad still to entertain such hopes——"

"Yes; but she is a dangerous lunatic. Her brother, as you know, shares her ambitious and obstinate ideas, although that worthy couple have as much reason to despair now, as they had to hope eighteen years ago."

"Alas, what miseries the criminal alacrity of that infernal Polidori occasioned during that time!"

"Speaking of that wretch, I have been told that he has been here within a year or two, steeped in misery, or else subsisting by disgraceful practices."

"What a fall! what degradation for a man of so much wit, learning, and talent!"

But how perverted by a bad heart! Heaven grant that he may not meet the countess! The union of two such evil spirits would be dangerous indeed. But the facts you have gathered; have you them with you?"

"Here they are," said the baron, drawing a paper from his pocket. "They relate to the researches made respecting the birth of the young girl called the Goualeuse, and concerning the present place of abode of an individual known by the name of François Germain, the son of the Schoolmaster."

"Will you read your notes to me, my dear Le Graun? I know the intentions of his highness, and I shall soon see whether your intelligence is satisfactory. You are quite satisfied with your agent?"

"He is a valuable man; sharp-witted, self-possessed, and discreet. I am obliged sometimes to moderate his zeal; for, as you are aware, his highness has reserved certain particulars——"

"And your agent is still unaware of what part the prince plays in all this?"

"Entirely so. My diplomatic situation furnishes an excellent pretext for the investigations with which I entrust him. M. Badinot (for such is his name) has many go-betweens and opened or concealed connections in almost every class and pursuit. Formerly, an attorney, he was expelled his profession for serious breaches of trust; he has, nevertheless, treasured the most exact statements of the fortune and station of his former clients; he is acquainted with many secrets which he unblushingly boasts of having sold profitably. Two or three times he has made fortunes, and become poor again just as often—too well, or rather too ill known, to be able to enter into any new speculations—reduced to living from day to day, by means more or less illegal—he is a sort of Figaro, to whose conversation it is highly entertaining to listen. As long as his interest so dictates, he belongs soul and body to whoever pays him: he has nothing to gain by deceiving us; moreover, I have a strict watch constantly kept over him, without his knowing it."

"The particulars which he has hitherto given have been found to be extremely correct."

"He has a peculiar honesty in his method of doing business; and I assure you, my dear Murphy, that M. Badinot is a perfect specimen of one of those mysterious beings which are only to be met with—nay, which cannot possibly be produced elsewhere but in Paris. He would greatly amuse his highness, if it were not important that they should not be known to each other."

"You can increase the pay of M. Badinot, if you think proper."

"Five hundred francs per month, and what he overcharges in the name of expenses, which amounts to nearly as much more, seem to me quite sufficient. He appears to be satisfied; however, we can see to that by-and-bye."

"And he is not ashamed of the sort of business he pursues?"

"He! Not in the least; he plumes himself upon it; he invariably assumes a most important air when he brings me his reports—I may almost say, with a diplomatic fuss; for the rogue actually pretends to suppose that he is engaged in state affairs, and affects wonderment at the secret connection which may exist between the most minute conflicting interests and the destinies of empires. Yes! he has the impudence to say to me sometimes,—'What complications, unknown to the vulgar, there are in the government of a state! Nevertheless, who would suppose, sir, that the notes with which I furnish you, share doubtless in influencing the course of the affairs of Europe?'"

"Good! knaves try to blind themselves even to their own baseness; it is the homage which vice pays to virtue. But these notes, my dear baron?"

"Here they are, almost entirely digested from the report furnished by M. Badinot."

"I am all attention."

De Graun then read as follows:—

"*Note relative to Fleur-de-Marie.*—About the beginning of the year 1827, a man known as Peter Tournemine, under sentence in Rochefort Prison, for the crime of forgery, proposed to a woman, named Gervaise, commonly called the Screech-Owl, to take the entire charge for the future of a little girl of six or seven years old, in consideration of the sum of one thousand francs, in a single payment.

"The bargain struck, the child was handed over to this woman, with whom she remained two years; at the end of which time, in order to escape the ill-treatment to which she was subjected, the young girl disappeared. The Owl had heard no more of her for some years, when she again saw her about six weeks ago in a cabaret in the city. The child, now grown into a young woman, was then known by the name of Goualeuse (Sweet-throat).

"A few days before this meeting, the said Tournemine, whom the Schoolmaster knew at the Rochefort galleys, had found means to transmit to one Red Arm (a secret and habitual correspondent of imprisoned convicts as well as those who have been discharged) a long letter concerning the child formerly entrusted to the woman Gervaise, *alias* Screech-Owl.

"From this letter, and from the declarations of the Owl herself, it appears that a certain Mrs. Seraphine, housekeeper to a notary named Jacques Ferrand, in the year 1827, commissioned Tournemine to find out some woman, who, for the sum of one thousand francs, would consent to take charge, altogether and permanently, of a child which was wished to be got rid of, as above mentioned. The Owl accepted the offer.

"The object of Tournemine in addressing this information to Red Arm, was to enable him, through some third party, to extort money from Mrs. Seraphine, by threatening to dig up this long-buried scandal. Tournemine further asserted that this Mrs. Seraphine was merely the tool of some unknown personages.

"Red Arm had communicated this letter to the Owl, some time the accomplice in the crimes of the Schoolmaster; which explains how this information came into the possession of the ruffian; and why, so soon as she recognised Fleur-de-Marie in the White Rabbit, the Owl, in order to torment her, said, 'We have found out your parents, but you shall never know who they are.'

"The point to be cleared up next was whether the letter written by Tournemine, concerning the child formerly handed over by him to the Screech-Owl, was strictly true.

"It has been ascertained that Mrs. Seraphine and the notary Ferrand are both living. The address of the latter is Rue de Sentier, No. 41. He passes for being austere and pious—at least, he is a great church-goer; in business he is so strict as to be accused of harshness; his practice is first-rate; and he lives with an economy bordering upon parsimony: Mrs. Seraphine is still his housekeeper. M. Ferrand, formerly very poor, has purchased his appointment for three hundred and fifty thousand francs. Part of this money was furnished to him by M. Charles Robert, a superior officer of the Paris National Guard, an extremely handsome young man, who is very fashionable and popular in certain company. Some evil speakers affirm that, in consequence of certain lucky *specs* upon the Stock Exchange, entered into in concert with M. Charles Robert, the notary must at present be in a situation to repay the cost of his place. But the reputation of M. Ferrand is so well established, that these reports are pretty unanimously set down as horrible calumnies. It seems, then, pretty certain, that the housekeeper of this holy man, Mrs. Seraphine, must be able to throw an entire light upon the birth of Goualeuse."

"Excellent, my dear baron!" said Murphy, "there is much that looks like truth in the declarations of this same Tournemine. Perhaps we may obtain, from this notary's housekeeper, some means of discovering the family of that unfortunate girl. And next, have you equally good information about the son of the Schoolmaster?"

"Less precise, perhaps—but still very satisfactory."

"Why, your M. Badinot is a treasure."

"You see that this Red Arm is the bearing-shaft of all this. M. Badinot, who must have some connection with the police, had already pointed him out to us as being the go-between of many convicts, since the first steps taken by his highness for the discovery of the son of Mrs. George Duresnel, the unfortunate wife of that monster the Schoolmaster."

"No doubt: and it was while seeking Red Arm in his dirty den in the City, No. 13, Rue

aux Feves, that Slasher and Goualeuse were met with. His highness was resolved to embrace this opportunity to visit these horrible haunts, thinking that he might find there some unfortunates to drag from the gutter. His anticipations have been fulfilled; but at the cost of what perils!"

"Perils, my dear Murphy, which you have bravely shared."

"Why else do I hold the appointment of Coalheaver in Ordinary to his royal highness?" replied the squire, with a smile.

"Rather say, his brave body-guard, my worthy friend. But to speak of your courage and devotion is to repeat a thrice-told tale; I will therefore resume my report. Here is the note concerning François Germain, son of Mrs. George and the Schoolmaster, otherwise called Duresnel:—

"It is about eighteen months ago that a young man, named François Germain, came to Paris, from Nantes, where he had been employed in the banking-house of Noel & Co.

"It appears, from the admissions of the Schoolmaster, and from many letters that were found upon him, that the wretch to whom he had entrusted his son, that he might be trained to evil-doing, and some day make a profitable tool in criminality, unveiled the horrible scheme to the young man, by proposing that he should assist in an attempt at robbery and forgery upon the house of Noel & Co., in which François Germain was employed.

"The young man repelled the proposal with indignation; but, unwilling to denounce the man who had fostered him, he wrote an anonymous letter to his employer, in which he warned him of the nature of the conspiracy to plunder the bank, then secretly quitted Nantes, that he might escape from those who had endeavoured to render him the tool and accomplice of their crimes.

"These wretches, learning of the departure of Germain, came to Paris, hid themselves with Red Arm, and set themselves to trace the son of the Schoolmaster; no doubt with the most villanous intentions—the young man being privy to their criminal projects. After many and long inquiries, they succeeded in discovering his address: it was too late. Germain, having some days previously met the man who had sought to corrupt him, left his lodging suddenly, suspecting the motive which had brought that man to Paris. Thus the son of the Schoolmaster once more escaped his persecutors.

"Still, however, about six weeks since, they discovered that he resided at No. 17, Rue du Temple. And he nearly fell into an ambuscade laid for him as he returned home one evening (a circumstance which the Schoolmaster kept back from his highness).

"Germain surmised whence this blow proceeded; he left the Rue du Temple, and again his persecutors were at fault. And in this position they remained until the moment when the Schoolmaster was punished for his crimes. It was at this point of the affair also that the researches were resumed by order of his highness, the result of which will be found below:—

"François Germain, for about three months, lived at No. 17, Rue du Temple, a house which is not a little remarkable for the manners and out-of-the-way pursuits of most of the people who live there. Germain was a great favourite among them by reason of his gay, frank, and obliging character. Although he appeared to live upon a very moderate income or salary, yet he had rendered the most kindly assistance to a poor family who occupied the garrets of this house. Inquiries have vainly been made in the Rue du Temple as to the new abode of François Germain, and as to the business or profession followed by him; it is supposed that he was employed in some office or house of business, as he left home in the morning and returned about ten o'clock at night. The only person who precisely knows the residence of the young man is a female lodger in the house No. 17, Rue du Temple; this young girl, who appeared to be very intimately connected with Germain, is an extremely pretty grisette, known as Miss Dimpleton. She occupies a room next to that in which Germain had lodged. That room, empty since Germain's departure, is still to let; and, under the pretext of hiring it, further information may be obtained."

"Dimpleton!" cried Murphy, suddenly, after a few moments of deep reflection; "I have heard that name somewhere."

"How, Sir Walter Murphy," replied the baron, laughing. "You, the worthy and respectable father of a family, know such people as grisettes? What! the name of Miss Dimpleton not new to you? Oh, fie, fie!"

"I'faith, his highness has put me in the way of making such strange acquaintances that you have no occasion to be so much astonished at that. Sir Baron: not so fast, if you please—yes, now I recollect it perfectly; in telling me the story of Goualeuse, his highness could not avoid laughing at the very odd name of Dimpleton; and, as well as I can remember, it was the name of a prison-companion of that poor Fleur-de-Marie."

"Well, just now Miss Dimpleton may be of vast service to us. But I will finish my report:—

"Perhaps some benefit might arise from hiring the room at No. 17, Rue du Temple. There were no orders to push the investigation any further; but, from some words which fell from the portress, there is every reason to believe, not only that it would be possible to find in this house traces for the discovery of the Schoolmaster's son, through the means of Miss Dimpleton, but that the place itself would afford his highness an opportunity of studying human nature amid

wants, difficulties, and misery, the very existence of which he is far from suspecting."

"Thus you see, my dear Murphy," said de Graun, finishing the reading of his report, and presenting it to the gentleman—"you see that it is from the notary, Ferrand, we must expect to obtain information as to Goualeuse's parents, and that it is from Miss Dimpleton that we must seek the present abode of François Germain. It seems to me a great thing to have ascertained the direction in which to search for that which we would find."

"Undoubtedly, baron. His highness, too, I am sure, will find an ample field for observation in the house of which you speak. But I have not yet done: have you gained any tidings relating to Marquis d'Harville?"

"Yes; and so far as money matters are concerned, the fears of his royal highness are wholly unfounded. M. Badinot affirms (and he is very likely to be well informed on the subject) that the wealth of the marquis was never better secured, nor more ably managed."

"After having in vain conjectured the possible cause of the deep and secret grief which preys upon Lord d'Harville, his highness imagined that perhaps the marquis was involved in pecuniary difficulties. Had it been so, he would have removed them in that mysteriously delicate manner which you know he adopts to veil his generosity: but since he is mistaken in his surmises, he must abandon all hope of solving this riddle; which he will do with the greater reluctance on account of his ardent friendship for Lord d'Harville."

"Which is easily accounted for. His royal highness has never forgotten the highly important services rendered to his father by the father of the marquis. Are you aware, my dear Murphy, that, in 1815, the period of remodelling the States of the Germanic Confederation, the sovereignty of his royal highness's father was in imminent peril of annihilation, on account of his proved attachment to Napoleon? Thanks to the friendship with which the Emperor Alexander honoured him, the deceased Marquis d'Harville was enabled to render the greatest service to our patron's father. The emperor, whose warm regard for the late marquis had taken its date from the period of that nobleman's emigration to Russia, had a paramount influence in the Congress wherein were debated the destinies of the princes of Germany. This mighty aid, implored by the Marquis d'Harville, preserved to our patron's father his wide domains. As to the friendship now between the present marquis and his royal highness, I believe that dates from 1815, when the old Marquis d'Harville resided for some time at the court of the then reigning Grand Duke, when their respective sons were playmates."

"Yes; they have cherished the sweet remembrance of those pleasant boyhood days. Nor is this all. So profound is his highness's gratitude for the services rendered to his father, that all belonging to the family of d'Harville possess a powerful claim on the kindness of the prince. Thus, it is not less to her virtues or her misfortunes than to this relationship poor Mrs. George owes the unwearied kindnesses of my lord."

"Mrs. George! wife of Duresnel, the convict known as the Schoolmaster!" exclaimed the baron.

"Yes—the mother of that François Germain, whom we were seeking, and, I trust, shall find."

"She is related to Lord d'Harville?"

"She was his mother's cousin, and her most intimate friend: the old marquis entertained the most perfect friendship for Mrs. George."

"But how came it, that the d'Harville family allowed a scion of their family to marry this villain Duresnel?"

"The father of this unfortunate woman was one de Lagny, lord high steward of Languedoc, who, previous to the Revolution, possessed immense property. Happily he escaped the proscription. In the first return of social calm which succeeded that terrible epoch, he desired to see his daughter well married. Duresnel, the representative of a wealthy and respectable family, possessing powerful influence in the National Assembly, pressed his suit. Concealing the depravity of his disposition beneath the most specious exterior, to this man was Mdlle. de Lagny united. A very short time sufficed to strip the mask from his character, and to display his natural propensities. A gambler, spendthrift, and profligate, addicted to the lowest vices that can disgrace a human being, he soon dissipated, not only his own fortune, but also that of his wife, in gaming and debauchery. Even the estate to which Madame George Duresnel had retired was involved in the general ruin. Taking her son with her, she sought an asylum with her relation the Marchioness d'Harville, whom she loved with the tenderness of a sister. Duresnel, utterly ruined, was reduced to desperation: he sought in crime new resources to supply his profligacy. He became a forger, a robber, a murderer; was detected, and sentenced to the galleys for the term of his natural life. Yet, even there, he found means to carry off his son from his unhappy wife, and confide him to a villain of his own kidney. You know the rest. After the condemnation of her husband, Madame George, without assigning any reason for the step, quitted the Marchioness d'Harville, and went to hide her shame in Paris, where she soon fell into a state of horrible destitution. It would occupy too much time to tell you by what train of events our patron became cognizant of the misfortunes of this excellent woman, and the ties which connected her with the D'Harville family: it is sufficient that he came most generously to her assistance, induced her to quit Paris, and keep the farm at Boqueval, where she now is, with Goualeuse. In

this peaceful retreat, she has found tranquillity, if not happiness; and the overlooking and the management of the farm may serve to prevent her thoughts from dwelling too deeply on her past sorrows. As much to spare the almost morbid sensibility of Mrs. George, as from a disinclination to blazon his own good deeds, my lord has not even acquainted Lord d'Harville with the fact of his having snatched his kinswoman from frightful want."

"I now understand the double interest which his highness feels in discovering the traces of this poor woman's son."

"You will also judge from this, my dear baron, of the affection borne by his highness to the whole of this family, and how intense is his grief at seeing the young marquis so sad, amidst so many reasons for being happy."

"In fact, what is it that Lord d'Harville can pine for? He unites everything that is desirable—birth, fortune, wit, and youth; his wife is handsome, and as lady-like in all behaviour as she is lovely——"

"That is all true; and his highness never thought of the inquiries of which we have been speaking, until he had, in vain, sought to discover the origin of Lord d'Harville's dark melancholy; indeed, the latter has shown himself deeply sensible of the kindness of his highness, yet always observes the same guarded reserve as to the subject of his sadness. Perchance, it is some affair of the heart?"

"And yet he is said to be strongly attached to his wife; and she gives him no cause for jealousy. I often meet her in society: she is much followed, as a young and lovely woman always is; but her reputation has never received the slightest blemish."

"Yes, the marquis takes the utmost pride in his wife. There has been only one slight difference between them, and that was on account of the Countess Sarah Macgregor."

"She sees her, then?"

"By the most unfortunate chance, the father of Marquis d'Harville was acquainted some seventeen or eighteen years since with Sarah Seyton, of Halsbury, and her brother Thomas, at that time residing at Paris, where they were patronized by the English ambassador's lady. Learning that the brother and sister were going to Germany, the old marquis gave them letters of introduction to his highness's father, with whom the old marquis maintained a constant correspondence. Alas! my dear de Graun, had it not been for this introduction many misfortunes would never have occurred; but for that, his highness would most probably never have known this woman. However, when the Countess of Macgregor returned hither, knowing the friendship of his highness and the marquis, she presented herself at Harville House, in the hope that she would there meet with his highness; for she as eagerly pursues him as he sedulously avoids her."

"Disguises herself as a man, in order to follow his highness, even into the City! Who but herself could conceive such an idea?"

"Perhaps she hoped thereby to touch his highness's feelings, and so force him to an interview, which he has constantly avoided and refused. But to return to Lady d'Harville. Her husband, to whom his highness had described the true character of the Countess of Macgregor, advised his wife to see her as seldom as possible; but the young marchioness, seduced by the hypocritical flatteries of the countess, offered some opposition to the wishes of the marquis on that point. Then arose some trifling disagreements; but, assuredly, not sufficient to cause the deep distress of the marquis."

"Oh! these women, these women! My dear Murphy, I very much regret that Lady d'Harville is in any way connected with this foreigner. That lovely young marchioness can only be a loser by any connection she may have with so diabolical a creature."

"Talking of diabolical creatures," said Murphy, "here is a despatch relative to Cecily, the unworthy wife of the excellent David."

"Between ourselves, my dear Murphy, this audacious octoroon richly deserves the terrible punishment which her husband, the excellent negro doctor, was the instrument of inflicting upon the Schoolmaster, by order of his highness. She, also, has caused blood to flow, and her corruption is unparalleled."

"And yet so lovely and seducing! A fiendish soul in an angelic frame augments my disgust."

"In that respect Cecily is doubly hateful; but I hope this dispatch countermands his highness's latest orders concerning that wretch."

"On the contrary, baron——"

"Then his highness still wishes her to be assisted in making her escape from the fortress in which she is sentenced to be confined for life?"

"Yes."

"And her pretended ravisher to bring her to France—to Paris?"

"Yes; and, moreover, this dispatch commands that no delay shall take place in assisting in the escape of Cecily, and that she shall be brought hither with such speed as to allow of her arriving in a fortnight at the very latest."

"I am astonished! His highness had always shown the utmost possible horror of that woman."

"And he now manifests more of that horror than ever; if, indeed, that is possible."

"And, notwithstanding, he desires her to be brought to him. To be sure, it is a very easy matter to deport Cecily again, if she do not accomplish what he expects of her. Orders have been transmitted to the son of the gaoler of Gerolstein fortress to carry her

off, under the pretext of being in love with her, and all necessary facilities will be given to the accomplishment of his project. Enraptured with this opportunity of obtaining her liberty, the octoroon will follow her supposed abductor. Arrived in Paris, she will still remain under the weight of her sentence; she will still be an escaped and convicted offender; and I have so arranged it that, whenever his highness requires it, he will only have to apply to obtain her extradition."

"I must also tell you, my dear baron, that when David learned that Cecily was about to return, he was horrified. At length he cried: 'I hope that your highness will not oblige me to see that monster.' 'Do not be alarmed,' replied my lord; 'you shall not see her, but I may require her presence in aid of certain projects of my own.' David was relieved from an enormous weight of care by those few words; nevertheless, I am sure that this circumstance awakened most painful feelings in his mind."

"Poor negro! he still loves her! She is said to be so extremely beautiful too!"

"Beautiful; far too beautiful. It would require a slave-driver's practised eye to discover the mixed blood in the almost imperceptible blue which lightly colours her rosy finger-nails; our fairest northern beauties have not a more transparent complexion, nor a whiter skin."

"I was in France when his highness returned from America, bringing with him David and Cecily; I know that the excellent negro has ever since been attached to his highness by the warmest gratitude; but I have never learned how he became thus devoted to our master's service, or how he happened to marry Cecily, whom I saw for the first time about a year after her marriage: and heaven knows how much scandal she had already caused!"

"I can inform you of every particular you desire to know, my dear baron, for I accompanied his highness in his voyage to America, where he snatched both David and this octoroon from a most frightful condition."

"You are truly kind, my dear Murphy; I am all attention," said the baron.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE STORY OF DAVID AND CECILY.

"MR. WILLIS, a wealthy Florida planter," began Murphy, "perceived in one of his black slaves, named David, engaged in the infirmary attached to the plantation, a remarkable degree of intelligence; a deep and attentive sympathy with the poor patients, to whom he showed with delight those attentions which were ordered by the doctors; and furthermore, such a singular talent for botany, as applied to medicine, that he had, without any instruction, composed and classified a sort of Flora of the plants of the grounds and its neighbourhood. The Willis plantation, situated on the sea-coast, was fifteen or twenty leagues distant from the nearest town; and the doctors of the country, besides being extremely ignorant, were unwilling to travel so far over bad roads and by indifferent conveyances. Wishing to provide a remedy for this great inconvenience, so serious in a country subject to violent epidemics, and to possess constantly a really able resident practitioner, this planter conceived the idea of sending David to France, there to study surgery and medicine. Delighted with the offer, the young negro set out for Paris; the planter defrayed all the costs of his studies, and, at the end of about eight years of diligent application, David received, with distinguished applause, the diploma of physician, and returned to America, to place his skill at the disposal of his master."

"But David was entitled to look upon himself as emancipated from slavery, both in fact and in law, by treading the soil of France."

"True; but David possesses a rare feeling of loyalty; he had promised Mr. Willis to return, and he did so. He did not, so to speak, consider that science his own property which had been acquired at the expense of his master: and further, he entertained the hope of bestowing amelioration, both moral and physical, upon the slaves, his former companions. He proposed to himself to be not only their physician, but also their support and their defender with the colonists."

"He must indeed possess a rare honesty, and a holy love for his fellow-creatures, to have returned to a master after living eight years at Paris, amidst the most democratic youth in all Europe——"

"By this trait, judge of the man. Behold him, then, again in Florida; treated by Mr. Willis, it must be confessed, with kindness and consideration, eating at his table, and lodging beneath his roof. This slave-owner, stupid, malignant, sensual, and, like almost all creoles, very despotic—considered himself extremely generous in giving David a hundred and twenty dollars per annum. Some months after, a fearful typhus fever ravaged the estate. Mr. Willis was attacked by it, but was promptly cured by the excellent treatment of David. Out of thirty negroes who were seriously affected, there were but two who sank under it. Mr. Willis, delighted with the ability displayed by David, raised his salary to two hundred and fifty. The black doctor was now the happiest man in the world; his brethren looked upon him as a friend especially provided for them by Providence. He had with great difficulty, it is true, obtained from their master some amelioration of their condition, but he still hoped for more; and in the meantime he preached to them, consoled them, and exhorted them to resignation. He told them of the God

who looks with equal eye upon white man and black; and of a world to come not peopled with masters or slaves; of another life, the everlasting life, when men would no longer be the mere property, the mere beasts of burthen, of their fellow creatures, but where the victims of earthly wrong would be so blessed, that they would pray in that happier world for those who had been their torturers. What need I say more? To those unfortunate beings who, contrary to the feelings of other men, reckoned with a bitter pleasure their daily steps towards the grave—to those unfortunates who had hitherto possessed no other hope than that of annihilation—David imparted the aspiration of immortal liberty—their chains became less heavy, their labours less painful. David was their idol. Thus a year rolled by. Among the prettiest female slaves on this estate, the most remarkable was an octoroon, named Cecily. Mr. Willis took a fancy, after the sultan-fashion, to this young girl; for the first time in his whole life, perhaps, he was met by a refusal. Cecily loved; she loved David, who, during the raging of the recent epidemic, had attended her with devoted care. Love, a chaste love, now repaid that attention. David had too much delicacy of feeling to be capable of noising abroad his happiness before the day when he could espouse Cecily, which he intended to do at the commencement of her sixteenth year. Mr. Willis, ignorant of this mutual attachment, had proudly thrown the handkerchief to the pretty octoroon; and she, with a passion of indignant tears, communicated to David the brutal attempt from which she had with great difficulty escaped. The latter comforted and encouraged her, and went, on the instant, to Mr. Willis, to ask permission to marry her."

"Egad! my dear Murphy," said the baron; "I can easily guess the reply of our American sultan: he refused?"

"He did so. He had, he said, an inclination for this girl; in his whole life he had never put up with the insolence of a slave; he coveted this wench, and assuredly he would possess her. David might choose for himself another wife or another mistress, just as he liked; there were at least a dozen yellow girls or saddle-colours on the plantation as pretty as Cecily. David talked of his love, long since reciprocated: the planter whistled. David persisted: but in vain. His owner had the impudence to tell him, that it was a bad example for a master to yield a point to a slave, and that it was an example which he would not set for the sake of satisfying a mere notion. David now condescended to supplicate; the master grew petulant, and David, too proud to humble himself further, spoke in a firm tone of his services, of his disinterestedness, and the paltry stipend he contentedly received. Irritated at this, Mr. Willis replied, that he was treated a thousand times too well—for *a slave!* These words roused the spirit of David. For the first time, he spoke like a man who had tasted rights by his residence of eight years in France. Mr. Willis was furious; threatened to clap him in irons as a rebellious slave. David replied in bitter and violent terms. Two hours afterwards he was tied to a post, and flogged; while Cecily, before his eyes, was dragged to the harem of the planter."

"The conduct of this slave-owner was at once stupid and barbarous. He was absurd in his cruelty. He had need of this man after all——"

"So much need, that, on that very day, the rage into which he had thrown himself, added to the intoxication in which the beast indulged every evening, brought on an inflammatory attack of the most dangerous description, the symptoms of which were developed with the rapidity peculiar to such affections. The planter was confined to his bed in a state of high fever. He sent an express for a doctor; but the leech could not possibly arrive at the plantation in less than six-and-thirty hours."

"Upon my word, this attack seems providential, this fellow's sufferings were richly merited."

"The malady increased with alarming rapidity. David alone had the power to save him; but Willis, suspicious, as the wicked always are, imagined that the black would take revenge, by administering poison in the medicine; for, after David had been flogged, he had been thrown into a dungeon. At length, terrified at the progress of the fever, humbled by suffering, and, thinking that, at the worst, he had at least a chance of safety in trusting to the generosity of David, Willis, after a violent internal struggle, gave orders for him to be released from his chains."

"And David saved the planter?"

"For five days and nights he watched over him, as though he had been his father, combatting the disease in each successive stage with admirable skill, and in the end he triumphed, to the exceeding astonishment of the other doctor, who had not arrived until the second day."

"And, on his restoration to health, the planter——"

"To avoid blushing before his slave, whose unparalleled generosity continually reproached him, Mr. Willis, at a great expense, contrived to attach to his establishment the doctor he had sent for—and David was sent back to his dungeon.

"The act was atrocious, but does not by any means surprise me; David would have been to this man a personification of remorse."

"Moreover, this barbarous conduct was not dictated solely by vengeance and jealousy. Mr. Willis's slaves loved David with all the ardour of gratitude; he was to them a deliverer of both body and soul. They knew what cares he had bestowed upon the planter during his illness: hence, shaking off the

brutalizing apathy into which slavery usually plunges a human being, these unfortunates loudly testified the indignation, or rather the grief, they felt when they saw David lacerated by the whip. The exasperated Willis suspected that, in this natural and grateful feeling, he saw the germ of a rebellion. Well aware of the influence that David had acquired among the slaves, he thought David capable of putting himself at the head of an outbreak to avenge his wrongs. This groundless fear was a new motive to the planter to overwhelm poor David with ill-treatment, and to deprive him of power to execute the malicious designs of which he suspected him."

"In this point of view, as a panic fear, the brutal planter's conduct seems less stupid, though no less ferocious."

"A short time after these events, we arrived in America. His highness had freighted a Danish brig at St. Thomas's, and we visited incognito all the towns of the American Coast along which we were sailing, We were received with much ostentation by Mr. Willis; at an entertainment which took place the day after our arrival, the planter, heated with wine into a cynical, boasting fit, told us, with horrible jestings, the story of David and Cecily —for I have hitherto forgotten to tell you, that, after dishonouring Cecily, he had thrown her also into prison, by way of punishing the disdain with which she had first received his proposals. On hearing this disgusting recital, his highness imagined that Mr. Willis was either drunk or lying: though drunk, however, this man had told no lie; and to satisfy his apparent incredulity, he desired a slave to take a lantern, and lead us to David's dungeon."

"And what then?"

"In the whole course of my life, I never saw a sight so distressing. Haggard, meagre, half naked, and covered with festering stripes, David and the poor girl—chained by the middle, one at each end of the dungeon—resembled two spectres. The lantern that lighted us, threw a deeper tinge over this mournful picture. David said not a word on our appearance; there was a dreadful vacancy in his stare. Willis said to him, with a cruel irony of tone: 'Well, doctor, how do you find yourself, by this time? You who are so 'tarnal smart—why don't you cure yourself?' The black replied with a sublime gesture and a single word; slowly raising his right hand, and extending his forefinger towards the roof, he, without even deigning to look at the planter, said, in a solemn tone: 'HEAVEN!' and then was silent. '*Heaven!*' repeated the planter, with a burst of laughter; 'ask it, then, to snatch you from my hands. I'll bet ten bales it can't!' Then, maddened by rage and intoxication, the planter shook his clenched fist at heaven, and blasphemously exclaimed: 'Yes, I defy heaven to give my pickers free tickets till they are dead. If not done, I deny it's existence!'"

"He was a brutal fool."

"His blasphemy filled our hearts with disgust. His highness said not a word. We left the dungeon, as well as the plantation, which was situated on the sea-shore, and returned to our vessel, which was moored at a short distance. At one o'clock in the morning, when all the building were buried in deep sleep, our patron landed with eight men, well armed, went straight to the dungeon, forced the doors, and carried off both David and Cecily. The two victims were safely on board our ship, without any one on shore even suspecting our expedition: his highness and I then went to the house of the planter. Strange hardihood! These men torture their slaves, yet take no precaution against their vengeance, but sleep with both doors and windows open. Thus without obstruction we made our way to the planter's bedroom, the interior of which was lighted by a small glass lamp. His highness awakened the man, who sprang up in alarm, his brain yet seething with the fumes of his debauch. 'You have to-night blasphemously defied God to snatch your two victims from you before their death—He has taken them!' said his highness, solemnly. Then, taking a bag which I carried, containing five thousand dollars in gold, he threw it upon the bed of the man, and added: 'That will indemnify you for the loss of your two slaves. To your violence which slays, I oppose a violence that saves. God will judge between us.' We then departed, leaving Mr. Willis motionless and stupified, and imagining himself under the influence of a dream. In a few minutes we had regained our brig, and set sail."

"It seems to me, however, my dear Murphy, that his highness overpaid this wretch for the loss of his two slaves; for, in strictness, David did not belong to him."

"We calculated, as nearly as we could, the expense of his studies during eight years, and then tripled the price of himself and Cecily as common slaves. Our conduct, I am aware, was an infraction of the law of property; but if you had seen the horrible condition in which we found the two victims, who seemed almost in their last agony, and if you had heard the drunken tyrant uttering his impious defiance, you would feel why his highness wished, as he said, upon this occasion, *to act, humbly, the part of a Providence.*"

"It appears to me, that this is open to censure, as well as praise—like the act of punishing the Schoolmaster, my worthy Sir Walter. But had this affair no result?"

"It could not have. The brig was under Danish colours, his highness's incognito was rigidly kept, and we were taken for wealthy English. To whom could Willis have complained—even had he dared to complain at all? In fact, he had himself told us, and his highness's physician confirmed it in a report that the two slaves could not have survived another week in that frightful dungeon. In-

deed, it required the most zealous and skilful care to rescue David and Cecily from death. At length, however, they were pronounced out of danger; and from that day forth, David has been attached to the suite of my lord as his medical man, to whom he evinces the deepest devotedness."

"David doubtless married Cecily on reaching Europe?"

"This marriage, from which so much happiness might reasonably have been expected, took place in the chapel of his highness's palace. But by a strange revulsion of feeling, scarcely was Cecily in the enjoyment of a position she could so little have hoped for, when, forgetful of all that David had suffered for her, and all that she had suffered for him, she blushed, in the new world into which she was thrown, at having *married a negro!* Seduced, moreover, by a horribly depraved man, Cecily committed her first fault. It would seem that, up to that period, the natural perversity of this unhappy girl had slept, requiring only that first temptation to awaken it into criminal energy. You know the scandal of her subsequent adventures. After two years of marriage, David, whose confidence in her was only equalled by his love, learned the full extent of her infamy. A thunderbolt aroused him from his blind security."

"It is said that he wished to kill his wife."

"Yes; but thanks to the entreaties of his highness, he consented to have her shut up for life in a fortress; and it is this prison which his highness is now about to throw open—to your great astonishment, as well as mine—for I will not conceal that from you, my dear baron. But it is growing late, and his royal highness desires that your courier should start for Gerolstein with as little delay as possible."

"Before two o'clock he will be on the road; so now, my dear Murphy, adieu till evening."

"Till the evening, farewell."

"Have you then forgotten that there is a grand ball at the —— Embassy, and that his highness should be there?"

"True; I am continually forgetting that, since the absence of Colonel Varner and Count Arnheim, I have to fulfil the united functions of chamberlain and aid-de-camp."

"Speaking of the count and the colonel, when do they return? Are their missions to be quickly achieved?"

"As you are aware, my dear baron, his highness has sent them away, that he may enjoy solitude and liberty as long as possible. As to the missions, the one to Avignon and the other to Strasbourg, which his highness has given them, in order that he might get handsomely rid of them for a time, I will tell you the particulars some day when we are more melancholy than we should be: for I defy the veriest hypochondriac to avoid laughing heartily, not only at this solemn trust, but at certain passages of the dispatches of these two worthy gentlemen, who set out upon their supposed missions with incredible gravity."

"To tell the truth, I have not been able to comprehend why the count and the colonel have been taken by his highness as his personal attendants."

"Why, is not Colonel Varner the type, the pattern of military perfection? Can you find in the whole Germanic Confederation a finer figure, a more splendid moustache, or a more undeniable martial swagger? And when he is belted, and booted, spurred and plumed, can we possibly look upon a more imposing, a more glorious, a prouder, or a handsomer—animal?"

"Exactly so; but it is precisely this animal beauty which makes him look anything but an intellectual creature."

"Well, his highness says that, thanks to the colonel, he is enabled to endure the dullest fellows in the world. Previous to certain tedious audiences, he closets himself for a short half-hour with the colonel, and then he comes forth radiant, gay, and ready to bid defiance to boredom personified."

"Just as the Roman soldier who, preparing for a long forced march, was wont to wear leaden sandals, so that, on putting them aside, all fatigue seemed light. I now understand the high utility of the colonel. But Count Arnheim?"

"He also is very serviceable to his highness; for, by incessantly having beside him that old tinkling cymbal, shiny and ringing—by looking constantly upon that inflated soap-bubble, so puffed out with nothing, which represents so aptly the theatrical and puerile side of royalty, his highness feels more accurately the value of these barren pomps; and by contrast, he has often owed to the contemplation of the uselessly glittering chamberlain the most serious and pregnant ideas."

"But, let us be just, my dear Murphy. In what court can we possibly find a more perfect model of a chamberlain; who, better than this excellent Arnheim, knows the innumerable rules and traditions of etiquette? who can more gravely carry an enamelled cross at his neck, or bear more majestically a golden key on his back?"

"As for that, baron, his highness declares that the back of a chamberlain has a most especial look: it has, he says, an expression at once constrained and revolting, which is painful to look at; for alas! it is at the back of the chamberlain that the bright symbol of his office glitters; and according to his highness, the worthy Arnheim seems always to present himself backwards, that all may at once appreciate his due importance."

"The fact is, that the incessant subject of the count's meditations is the question of knowing by what fatal fancy they have placed the chamberlain's key behind his back; as he once said, very judiciously, with a kind of angry sorrow: 'Plague on't! it is not with one's back that one opens a door, at any rate!'"

"Baron, the courier! the courier!" said Murphy, pointing to the clock.

"What a sad dog you are, to keep me chattering so long! It is your fault. Present my respects to his highness," said de Graun, hastily taking up his hat. "Farewell till evening, my dear Sir Walter."

"Adieu till evening, dear baron; and rather late in the evening too, for I am certain that his highness will not let the day pass without paying a visit to the mysterious house in the Rue du Temple.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A HOUSE IN THE RUE DU TEMPLE.

IN order to profit by the information which Baron de Graun had collected respecting Goualeuse and Germain, the Schoolmaster's son, it was necessary that Rudolph should go to the house in the Rue du Temple, recently inhabited by Germain. The Prince wished also to endeavour to discover the retreat of the young man through the medium of Miss Dimpleton; a difficult task, probably, as the girl could hardly fail to be aware that the son of the Schoolmaster had the greatest interest in keeping his new abode completely unknown. By hiring the room lately occupied by Germain in the house of the Rue du Temple, Rudolph would facilitate his researches, and above all would obtain the opportunity of closely observing the different classes of people by whom it was occupied.

Accordingly, on the day of the conversation between Baron de Graun and Murphy, Rudolph, humbly clad, directed his steps, about three o'clock, on a dreary winter's afternoon, towards the Rue du Temple. Situate in the centre of a dense trading neighbourhood, the house in question externally possessed nothing very remarkable; it was composed of a ground-floor, occupied by a man keeping a low drinking-shop, and of four stories, surmounted by garrets. A dark and narrow alley led to a small court-yard, or rather to a sort of square, dry well, five or six feet wide, completely excluded from air and light, and serving as a receptacle for all the filth thrown down by the several occupants of the respective chambers; for unglazed apertures on each landing-place opened upon this offensive pit.

At the foot of a dark and damp staircase, a dull, lurid light indicated the housekeeper's room; a nook besmoked and begrimed by the burning of a lamp, necessary even at noonday, to light the gloomy den into which Rudolph entered for the purpose of asking leave to see the empty room.

A lamp, placed behind a glass globe filled with water, which served as a reflector, lighted the lodge; at the far end of which one might perceive a bed, covered with a patchwork quilt, exhibiting a confused pattern of almost every known colour and material; on the left stood a walnut-wood washing-table, the marble top of which supported, by way of ornaments, firstly, a small St. John in wax, with his white lamb and flaxen wig; the whole enclosed in a cracked glass shade, the breaches of which were ingeniously closed with strips of blue paper. Secondly, two old plated candlesticks, tarnished red with age, supporting, instead of candles, a pair of gold-frosted oranges, which, doubtless, had been given to the portress as new years' gifts. Thirdly, two boxes, one of many-coloured straw, the other encrusted with small shells: these two specimens of industry smelt strongly of the hulks or the house of correction.* (Let us hope, for the morality of the portress of the Rue du Temple, that these were not given to her as "author's presentation copies?") And lastly, between the two boxes, and under a glass clock-cover, a pretty pair of red morocco boots —a veritable pair of doll's boots, but most artistically and carefully worked and ornamented. This master-piece, as the ancients would style them, added to certain fantastic designs sketched on the walls, with an innumerable quantity of old boots and shoes, sufficiently announced that the porter of this house devoted himself to the art of cobbling.

When Rudolph ventured into this dungeon, Pipelet, the porter, temporarily absent, was represented by Mrs. Pipelet. This lady, seated near a stove about the centre of the apartment, seemed to listen with grave interest to the singing of her pot.

Henri Monnier, the Hogarth of France, has so admirably depicted *the housekeeper*, that we shall content ourselves by merely requesting the reader, if he wishes to figure to himself Mrs. Pipelet, to imagine the ugliest, the most wrinkled, the most ragged, the most carbuncled, the most toothless, the most morose, the most *serpent-slimy* of all portresses immortalized by that eminent writer, artist, and actor. The only trait which we will permit ourselves to add to this beau-ideal, is a head-dress composed of a Brutus wig, originally of a flaxen colour, but changed by time into every conceivable tone of red, brown, and yellow, somewhat resembling the tints of autumnal foliage, and which was matted into an inextricable mass of hard, stiff, and staring cork-screws. Mrs. Pipelet never laid aside this tasteful covering to her sexagenarian skull.

At sight of Rudolph, the portress inquired in a surly tone the regular challenge: "Where are you going?"

"Madame, I believe there is a room with bed-room to let in this house?" said Rudolph, laying upon the word *madame* an emphasis which seemed not a little to flatter Mrs. Pipelet, for she answered less acidly: "There is a

* The convicts and other prisoners occupy their spare time almost exclusively in the manufacture of such knicknacks.

room to let on the fourth floor, but you cannot see it just now: Alfred has gone out."

"Your son, no doubt, madame? Will he return soon?"

"I am not speaking of my son, but of my husband, sir. Why should not Pipelet be called Alfred, pray?"

"There can be no doubt, madame, of his perfect right to be so called; but, if you will permit me, I will await his return. I rather wish to take this room, for both the street and the neighbourhood suit me; the house too pleases me, because it seems to me to be admirably taken care of. However, before I look at the room, I should like to know if you, madame, can take charge of my little affairs? I make a point of always employing the authorized housekeeper, when such an arrangement is agreeable."

This proposition was expressed in such flattering terms—the *housekeeper*, too!—it completely won Mrs. Pipelet, who replied, "Oh! certainly, sir; I will attend on you. I shall feel it an honour to do so; and I will treat you like a prince for six francs a month."

"Then be it six francs, madame. Your name, if you please?"

"Pomona Fortunata Anastasia Pipelet."

"Good, Mrs. Pipelet; I close with your terms of six francs the month; and if the apartment suits me, what will be the rent of that?"

"With the closet, the apartment is a hundred and fifty francs a month; not a farthing can I abate: the leaseholder is a regular screw—a skinflint."

"And his name?"

"M. Red Arm."

That name and the remembrances which it called up, made Rudolph start.

"You say, Mrs. Pipelet, that the lessee of the house is——"

"M. Red Arm."

"And he lives——"

"Rue aux Feves, No. 13; he also keeps a wine-shop by the Champs Elysées."

There was no longer room for a doubt; it was beyond all question the same man. This coincidence astonished Rudolph.

"If M. Red Arm is only lessee," said he, "may I ask who the proprietor is?"

"M. Bourdon; but I have never had anything to do with anybody except M. Red Arm."

Wishing to ingratiate himself more fully with the portress, Rudolph resumed: "Look you, my dear Mrs. Pipelet, I am rather tired, and almost frozen; do me the favour to go to the spirit-shop, on the ground-floor, and bring me a bottle of bitters, and two glasses, or rather three glasses, as your husband will return presently." He placed a five-franc piece in the old woman's dirty paw.

"Oh! what, sir! you wish, then, that one should adore you at the very outset!" exclaimed the portress, whose carbuncled nose seemed to be suddenly illuminated by the fires of a Bacchane's thirst. "I will run to the dram-seller; but I will only bring a couple of glasses. I and Alfred always drink out of the same glass! Poor old darling! he is so fond of showing delicate attentions to women."

"Go, Mrs. Pipelet; we will wait for Alfred."

"Ah! but if any one comes, will you mind the lodge?"

"Never fear, madame."

The old woman went out.

A few minutes after, a postman tapped at the window of the lodge, and putting his hand into the apartment, merely said, "Three sous!"

"Six sous, I suppose you mean, as there are two letters," said Rudolph.

"One is paid," replied the postman.

Having paid the demand, Rudolph at first looked mechanically at the two letters which had been given to him; but he quickly saw they were worthy of a more careful examination. One of them, addressed to Mrs. Pipelet, exhaled through its cream-laid envelope a strong odour of peau d'Espagne; upon its seal of red wax were the initials C. R., surmounted by a helmet, and resting on the starred supporter of the cross of the Legion of Honour; the address was traced in a bold, firm hand. The heraldic ostentation of this cross and casque made Rudolph smile, and confirmed him in the idea that the letter was not written by a female. But who, then, could be this scented and emblazoned correspondent of Mrs. Pipelet? The other letter, written upon blue coarse paper, and fastened with a wafer, which had evidently been impressed with dots, made by a pin's head, was addressed to "M. Cæsar Bradamanti, Working Dentist." Evidently disguised, the writing of this superscription was entirely composed of capital letters. Whether it was mere fantasy, or a presentiment, that letter appeared to Rudolph to have a melancholy aspect. He remarked that some of the letters of the address were half effaced in one part of the paper, which seemed as though rubbed. A tear had fallen there.

Mrs. Pipelet returned, bringing the bottle of bitters and two glasses.

"I have loitered, have I not, sir? but when once one gets into Father Joseph's shop, there is no such thing as getting out again. Oh, the old rascal—he is so insinuating!"

"Here are two letters that the postman left for you, madame," said Rudolph.

"Oh, dear me! Pray, excuse me, sir. Have you paid for them?"

"Yes."

"You are very kind. Then I will pay you out of the change I have brought you back. How much is it?"

"Three sous," replied Rudolph, smiling at the singular mode of repayment adopted by Mrs. Pipelet. "But may I observe, without wishing to be impertinent, that you have

there a correspondent whose notes smell exceedingly nice."

"Let us see," said the portress, taking up the cream-laid note. "Upon my word, that is true: this note looks just like a *billet doux*. Oh, indeed! a real love-letter, depend upon it; yet, who is the villain that would dare to——"

"Suppose your husband had been here, madame?"

"For heaven's sake, don't mention that or I shall faint in your arms! After all, how stupid I am!" said the portress, shrugging her shoulders; "I know all about it, now; it is from the *commandant*. Bless my soul! what a fright I should have been in, for my Alfred is as jealous as an Arab!"

"But here is another letter, addressed to M. Cæsar Bradamanti."

"Oh! yes, the dentist on the third floor; I will let *Jack* hold it."

Rudolph fancied he had not heard aright; but he saw Mrs. Pipelet gravely throw the dentist's letter into an old *Jack*-boot which was hanging against the wall. He looked at her with surprise, and said: "How! you have put that letter——"

"Well, sir, I have put it into the letter-*boot*; it is safe there; when the lodgers come in, either I or Alfred shake the boot, and every Jack has his Joan."

While thus speaking, the portress had broken the seal of the letter addressed to her; she turned it about in every direction, and after a few moments of hesitation, said to Rudolph: "It is Alfred who always undertakes the reading of my letters, because I am not able to do so myself. Will you be so kind, sir, as——"

"To read that letter? most willingly, madame," said Rudolph, not a little curious to know something of this correspondent of Mrs. Pipelet. He read as follows, written upon cream-laid paper, in the corner of which were repeated the casque, the letters C. R., the heraldic supporters, and the Cross of Honour:—"To-morrow, Friday, at eleven o'clock, let the fires be lighted in both rooms, clean the mirrors, let all the coverings be taken off the furniture, especial care being taken not to injure the gilding while dusting, or to soil or burn the carpet while lighting the fires. If, perchance, I should not be here when a lady arrives in a coach, about one o'clock, and asks for me under the name of M. Charles, show her up to my apartments, bringing the key down, that I receive it on my arrival."

Spite of the ungrammatical style of this note, Rudolph perfectly understood what was going on, and he said to the housekeeper: "Who lives, then, on the first floor?"

The old woman laid her skinny yellow finger upon her hanging lip, and said, with a malicious grin, "Mum! it's a woman's little game."

"I only ask you, my dear Mrs. Pipelet, because before one lodges in a house, one likes to know——"

"That's quite right and proper; for that matter, I will willingly tell you all I know about it, which will not take me long. About six weeks ago, an upholsterer came here, looked at the first floor, which was to let, and asked the rent of it; the following morning he came again, with a handsome, fair young man, with small mustachios, fine linen, and the cross of the Legion of Honour. The upholsterer called this young man—Commander."

"He is a military man, then?"

"Military!" returned Mrs. Pipelet, shrugging her shoulders: "get along with you!—Military! why about the same as if Alfred were to dub himself a beef-eater."

"How so?"

"He only belongs to the National Guard: the upholsterer merely called him 'Commander' just to flatter him, just the same as it would flatter Alfred to call him beef-eater. At length, when the Commander (we know him by no other name) had seen all, he said to the upholsterer, 'This is good, this will suit me; see the proprietor, and arrange about it.' 'Yes, Commander,' said the other. And, on the following day, the upholsterer signed the agreement in his own name, and paid M. Red Arm six months in advance, because, as it seems, the young man did not wish to be known. Very soon afterwards the workmen came, turned the first floor topsy turvy, brought couches, silk curtains, glasses in gilt frames, and other superb goods, and made the place as grand as a restaurant on the Boulevards. Not to mention carpets to cover every corner, so thick and so soft that you would fancy yourself walking upon furs. When all was done, the Commander returned to see it, and said to Alfred, 'Can you undertake the care of this apartment; I shall not come here often: light the fires occasionally, and have everything ready to receive me, whenever I drop you a post-letter?' 'Yes, certainly, Commander,' said my flattering Alfred. 'And how much will satisfy you for that?' 'Twenty francs a month, Commander.' 'Twenty francs a month, porter? Why, you surely must be joking!' And behold our handsome swell, haggling like a pitiful miser, and trying to get the best of poor folks; and all for two or three beggarly francs, after going to the most abominable expenses for an apartment that he does not even live in. At length, by dint of battling, we got twelve francs a month out of the snob. Twelve francs! is not that enough to make one perspire? Away with such a paltry split-farthing commander! What a difference between him and you, sir?" added the portress, with her blandest smile! "You do not call yourself Commander; you have no paltry pride; you are not rich, or you would not mount to the fourth story, and yet you agree for six francs at the first word."

"And has this Commander been again?"

"You shall hear: that's the drollest part of it. It would seem that our Commander is prettily fooled. He has already written three times the same as to-day, to light the fire, and get everything ready for the arrival of a lady. Well! all has been got ready, but——"

"No lady has come?"

"Listen. The first of the three times the Commander arrived, all flurry and joy, humming tunes, and swaggering like a peacock. Well, he waited two long hours—not a soul came. As he was going out by our lodge, to see how he looked, and just to annoy him a little, Pipelet and I stopped him, and said, 'Oh! Commander, there has been no little lady to ask for you at all!' 'Very well! very well!' he replied to us, with a look of shame and anger; and away he strutted, biting his nails with rage. The second time, before he arrived, a messenger brought a little note, addressed to M. Charles. I guessed that the Commander was *done* a second time; and Pipelet and I were just laughing about it, when my gentleman came in. 'Commander,' said I, carrying the back of my left hand to my wig, like a regular trooper, 'here is a letter for you; it seems there is another counter-march to-day.' He looked at me fierce as Alexander, tore open the letter, read it, grew red as a lobster, and then off he shot, strutting and humming with closed lips, but he was confoundedly vexed for all that; for he's a passionate fellow—he has a white tip to his nose, and that's a sure sign; but it's fun to see him storm. 'Oh, ho! my ha'penny commander,' thought I, 'there's another dose for you; *that* will teach you to give only twelve francs a month for looking after your fine rooms!'"

"And the third time?"

"Oh! the third time I really thought it was all right. The Commander came; he looked as if the game was his own; his eyes were almost out of his head with joy and success. To do him justice, though, he is really a handsome young man, for all his meanness; well dressed, and stinking of musk like a civet cat. The ground was not good enough for him, he was so puffed up. He took the key, and, pointing to his apartment, said, with a joyous and consequential tone, as though he would revenge himself for having been fooled twice before, 'When the lady comes, you will direct her to my apartments.' Well, Pipelet and I were so curious to have a peep at the little lady—though even now we had our doubts as to her coming—that we left our lodge, and went and hid ourselves behind the door-post at the corner of the passage, to watch for her. This time, sure enough, a small blue cab, with the blinds closely drawn down, stopped just opposite the door. 'Good! here's the lady at last,' said I to Alfred; 'I see her black and white hood: let us stand a little aside, or perhaps we shall offend her.' Then we saw a little lady, with a muff upon her knees, whose countenance was hidden by a black veil, to say nothing of the pocket-handkerchief which she held constantly to her mouth, for she seemed to be weeping; but, behold you, when the steps were down, the lady, instead of alighting, said a few words to the coachman, who, very much astonished, shut the door."

"Then the lady did not get out?"

"No, she threw herself back in the coach, and pressed her hands to her eyes. I rushed forward, and said to the coachman, before he had got up into his seat, 'What! my good fellow! are you going to drive back again?' 'Yes,' said he. 'And where to?' asked I. 'To where I came from?' 'And where did you come from?' 'From the Rue Saint Dominique, corner of the Rue Belle Chasse.'"

At these words Rudolph shuddered. The Marquis d'Harville, one of his dearest friends, as has already been stated, and who had for some time past laboured under the deepest melancholy, lived in the Rue Saint Dominique, at the corner of the Rue Belle Chasse. Was it the Marchioness d'Harville who was thus hastening to her ruin? Had her husband suspicions of her misconduct—misconduct which, probably, was the sole cause of the misery by which he was devoured? These doubts rushed upon the mind of Rudolph. Yet he was acquainted with all the friends of the marchioness, and he could not remember to have ever seen her visited by any one who answered to the description of the Commander. After all, the young woman who had been spoken of, might possibly have taken a coach in the Rue Saint Dominique, without living there. That was no proof that this imprudent woman really was the marchioness; nevertheless, vague and painful suspicions haunted him. His abstracted and thoughtful air did not escape the notice of the portress.

"Well, sir, what are you in such a brown study about?" asked she.

"I was wondering what could be the reason for the lady, after coming as far as the very door, so suddenly changing her mind."

"What wonder, sir? a fright, an idea, a superstition! We poor women are so weak, so timid; are we not, sir?" said the horrible portress, with an air of hideous affectation. "It seems to me," she continued, "that if I had been going secretly like that—to play false to Alfred, for instance—that I should have been obliged to go backward and forward I don't know how often. But never! No, never! Poor old dear: there is no breathing soul under the canopy of Heaven that can say——"

"I believe you, Mrs. Pipelet. But this young woman?"

"I do not know whether she was young: we could not see even the tip of her nose; however, she went away as she had come, without trump or drum. If Alfred and I had received ten francs to drink her health, we could not have been better pleased."

"Why so?"

"Because we were thinking of the wry mouth the Commander would make; we knew that it would make us die of laughing. So, instead of going at once to tell him that the bird had flown, we allowed him to wait, and fret, and fume for a whole hour. Then I went up, with only my list shoes on my poor little feet; I reached his door, which was half open. I pushed it, and it gave a creak. The staircase is as dark as pitch, and so is the entrance to the apartment; so, behold you, as I entered the room, my Commander catches me in his arms, and cries in a drawling voice—'My dearest angel! in the name of heaven, what makes you so late?'"

Notwithstanding the more than grave thoughts which possessed him, Rudolph could not repress a smile, as he surveyed the grotesque wig and the repulsive, carbuncled, and wrinkled visage of the heroine of this ridiculous mistake.

Mrs. Pipelet resumed, after indulging in a hilarious grimace, which, for the moment, made her look uglier than ever; "He! he! he! that was a good one, wasn't it? But you shall hear. I did not reply, but held my breath, reclining in the arms of the Commander. All of a sudden, the brute cried out, thrusting me from him as if he had clutched a spider, 'What the devil have I here?' 'It is I, Commander, the portress,' replied I, coolly; 'and, as such, I must request you will keep your hands to yourself, and not take me by the waist, nor call me your angel, and tell me that I am late in coming! Only suppose Alfred had been in the way!' 'What do you want here?' cried he, furiously. 'Commander, the little lady has been here in a coach.' 'Well! and why don't you make haste and show her up? You are an ass! Did I not tell you to show her up?' 'Yes, Commander, it is true that you told me to show the little lady up.' 'Well?' 'Only the little lady——' 'Speak out, woman!' 'Oh! then the little lady has gone away again.' 'Ah! you have said or done something to cause her to do so,' cried he, more furious than ever. 'No, Commander, the lady did not even alight from the coach; as soon as the driver opened the door, she told him to shut it, and take her back to the place from which he had brought her.' 'The carriage cannot have got far!' exclaimed the Commander, rushing towards the door. 'I am afraid it has,' replied I, 'for it has been gone above an hour.' 'An hour!—an hour! Why did you not let me know sooner?' roared he with increased rage. 'Because, Commander, we thought we would spare you, as long as we could, the heavy tidings of your third sell,' said I, in the gentlest and most delicate manner. 'There!' thought I, 'that's a bite for you, my scented fop; I hope you will feel comfortable now at the thought of having taken *me* to your arms, instead of your fine madam.' 'Get out of the room! you are eternally boring me with your infernal stupidity!' shouted the Commander, tearing off his grand plaid dressing-gown, and throwing it, with his fine Greek cap, made of velvet, embroidered with gold, on the floor. It was a handsome dressing-gown, too. Such magnificent stuff! It dazzled the eyes: the Commander looked like a glowworm!"

"But you ran the risk of his not employing you again?"

"Oh, he knew better than that; he was under our thumb. He knew that we had discovered the residence of his fine lady, and had he said anything to us, we would have threatened to *blow* the whole affair. And then, who does he suppose is going to look after his rooms for his shabby twelve francs! —some strange woman, I suppose; but no, no—we would soon make the place too hot to hold her. Miserly wretch! Do you know, sir, that he had the meanness to examine his wood, that he might keep count how many lumps we burned in warming his rooms. Oh! he is some mushroom, some upstart, who has suddenly become rich. The fellow has the head of a lord, and the heart of a beggar, who squanders with one hand, and nips and pinches with the other. I don't wish him any harm, but it does exceedingly amuse me to see how the little woman baulks him. I will wager anything it will be the same thing to-morrow. She has appointed to come, but she won't. I must go and inform the fishwoman who lives next door, she likes a joke as well as I do, and is quite anxious to catch a glimpse of 'madam.' If she comes this time, we'll see whether she is fair or dark, and whether she is pretty. Now, sir, when we remember that there is some poor devil of a husband in the affair—oh! it's very laughable, isn't it?—but that is the poor man's own look-out. Oh, dear, oh, dear! pray excuse me—my pot has ceased to sing, it bubbles; the meat cries, 'Come and eat me!' It is honey-comb tripe. Won't it delight little Alfred! for, as he himself says—the old dear!—for thick tripe he would betray France! Yes, his beautiful France!—the dear old creature!"

While Mrs. Pipelet thus busied herself with household matters, Rudolph gave himself up to the most painful reflections. The female spoken of (whether or not the Marchioness d'Harville), had, no doubt, a long time hesitated, before she had agreed to a first and a second rendezvous; then alarmed at the consequences of her own imprudence, a salutary remorse had prevented her from fulfilling her dangerous promise. Supposing that the Marchioness d'Harville was the heroine of this lamentable adventure, Rudolph writhed with heartfelt agony, and this was rendered more acute by the remembrance that he had once felt a warm and sincere affection for that lady, as we shall hereafter see. But with Rudolph this honourable passion had ever remained mute and concealed, for he loved the Marquis d'Harville as a brother.

He questioned himself, how d'Harville, young, intellectual, devoted, generous, kind, and, above all, tenderly fond of his wife, could possibly be sacrified by her to such a ridiculous puppy, such an empty coxcomb as this Commander. Could the Marchioness have been taken by the face of this silly fellow, which was said to be very handsome? Yet Rudolph knew Lady d'Harville to be a woman of a warm heart, of delicate taste, and elevated character; one against whose fair fame the slightest whisper had never been breathed. After mature reflection, he almost persuaded himself that the wife of his friend was out of the question in this connection.

Mrs. Pipelet having finished her culinary arrangements, resumed her conversation with Rudolph.

"Who lives on the second floor?" inquired he of the portress.

"Mother Burette—a wonderful woman at cards. She reads in your hand as though it were a book. There are many people who come to her to have their fortunes told: and she makes her weight in money. However, fortune-telling is only one of her trades."

"What does she do besides?"

"She keeps a sort of private pawnbroker's—a loan office!"

"Oh! I understand; then the second-floor lodger lends upon pledges?"

"To be sure she does, and is far more reasonable than the licensed three-balls. Besides, she does not puzzle your brains with a heap of tickets, and memorandums, and reckonings—not she, it's all quite simple and plain. Suppose you take a shirt worth three francs to Mother Burette; she lends you ten sous; at the end of a week, you take her twenty sous, or else she keeps the shirt. How simple all that is—eh? All in round figures, you see; a child might understand it! And to see the comic objects they bring to her! Would you believe what she sometimes lends upon? I have seen her advance money upon a grey parrot, that swore like a raging madman—the blackguard!"

"Upon a parrot? what then was its value!"

"I'll tell you. The parrot was well known; it belonged to the widow of a factor, Mrs. Herbelot, living hard by, who, it was also understood, valued her parrot next to her life. Well, Mother Burette said to her: 'I will lend you ten francs on your beast, but if by this day week, at noon, you do not bring me my twenty francs (with interest, it would amount to that reckoning, in round numbers) —if you do not bring me my twenty francs, with the expenses of its keep, I will give your 'pretty Poll' a small salad of parsley, well seasoned with arsenic.' Oh! she knows her business well, that she does! Frightened at that, Mother Burette got her twenty francs at the end of the week: and Mrs. Herbelot took away her horrid beast of a parrot, which jabbered all the donner and blitzens, sacres and dammes you can think of; they used to make my poor dear Alfred quite blush—he is so shamefaced; but that is easily accounted for, as Alfred's mother was a nun, and his father a priest—of course, he was born during the time of the revolution—you know, sir, that in those times priests often married nuns."

"Mother Burette has no other trade, I suppose?"

"She has no other, that I know of. And yet, I don't exactly understand her secret doings in a little room, into which no one goes except M. Red Arm and an old one-eyed woman, called the Screech-Owl."

Rudolph looked at the portress with astonishment. The latter putting her own interpretation on the surprise of her future lodger, said to him, "It's a funny name, is it not, 'the Screech-Owl?'"

"Yes; does that woman often come here?"

"She had not made her appearance for six weeks, but the day before yesterday we saw her again. She limped a little."

"And what did she want with the fortune-teller?"

"That's more than I know: at least, as to what takes place in the little room which I told you of, where nobody but the Owl, M. Red Arm, and Mother Burette, ever go in. I have remarked nothing more than that on those occasions the one-eyed woman always brings a parcel in her basket, and that M. Red Arm always carries a bundle under his cloak, and that they never take anything away."

"And what do those parcels contain?"

"I know nothing at all about that, except that they make a sort of devil's tattoo; and then there's a whiff upon the staircase of sulphur, charcoal, and melted lead, or the like, and you hear puff, puff, puff! like a smith's forge. I verily believe that Mother Burette, at those times, deals with the old one, or practises magic—at least, so says M. Cæsar Bradamanti, the third-floor lodger. Oh! there is a learned individual, that M. Cæsar! When I say an individual, I ought to say an Italian, although he speaks French as well as you or me, if he hadn't a very strong accent—but that's nothing. He is a real learned man, that: and he understands simples, and will take out your teeth, not for the sake of money, but merely for the honour. Yes, sir, for pure honour: for if you have six bad teeth—and he cares not who knows it, for he says so himself—he will pull out the first five for nothing, and only charge for the sixth! Then he sells all sorts of remedies for all sorts of complaints—diseases of the chest, coughs, colds—every nice ill a body can enjoy! He mixes his own drugs and medicines, and employs as his assistant, the son of our lessee, little Hoppy. The boy says his master is going to buy a horse and a red coat, and proclaim his medicines in all places of public resort, and that he (young

Hoppy) is to be dressed like a troubadour, and bang a drum to attract customers."

"It seems to me that the son of your landlord fills but a very humble situation."

"His father says he wishes to break the child in betimes, otherwise he would end his days in a slip-knot. He certainly is the ugliest and most mischievous little monkey in the world. He has played off more than one trick upon poor M. Cæsar Bradamanti, who is the very pink of worthy creatures. Since he cured Alfred of his rheumatism, we have worn him on our hearts; and yet, sir, there are people ill-natured enough to say—but no—it makes the hair of one's head stand on end! Alfred says, that if it were true, it would send him to the galleys."

"But what is it?"

"Oh! I dare not—I can never venture to——"

"Well, say no more about it."

"On the faith of an honest woman, it would be improper to disclose such a thing to a young man——"

"Say no more about it, Mrs. Pipelet."

"And yet, as you will be our lodger, it is but proper to forewarn you that there are falsehoods going about. You are, I suppose, in a position to be on terms of acquaintance and friendship with M. Cæsar? Now, if you should believe these reports, you would probably be disgusted with his acquaintance, so I'll whisper in your ear that——"

Rudolph inclined his head, and the old woman muttered a few words, which caused him to start with an exclamation of horror and disgust.

"Oh, but this is abominable."

"Shocking, isn't it—if it was true? But treat it as I do—all scandal and lies. Is it likely that a man who has cured Alfred of his rheumatism—a man who offers to draw five out of six of your teeth gratis—a man who has certificates of having cured I don't know how many princes, all over Europe, and who pays his rent down on the nail? I'd believe anything before that."

While Madame Pipelet thus displayed her indignation against slanderers, Rudolph called to mind the letter addressed to the quack; that letter written upon coarse paper, and in a counterfeited hand, half effaced by the dropping of a tear! In that tear, in that mysterious letter, Rudolph saw the outline of a drama, a tragic drama. An involuntary presentiment told him that the frightful reports about this Italian were founded in truth."

"Oh! here comes my Alfred!" exclaimed the portress; "he will tell you as well as I, that they are wicked slanderers, who accuse poor M. Cæsar Bradamanti—who has completely cured dear Alfred's rheumatism."

M. Pipelet entered the lodge with a grave and magisterial air. He was about sixty years of age; had an enormous nose, a protuberant corporation, and a broad countenance, carved and coloured after the fashion of the droll mannikin nutcrackers of Nuremberg. This strange mask of a face was shaded by a broad-brimmed chimney-pot hat, rusty with age. Alfred, who was as constant to his hat as his wife was to her grotesque wig, was enveloped in an old green coat, with enormous skirts, and lappels which were, so to speak, turned up with grease, so brightly did the great greyish patches here and there shine. Notwithstanding his hat and green coat, which had about them an air of full-dress, M. Pipelet had not laid aside the humble emblem of his craft—a leathern apron described a tan triangle upon his long waistcoat, which was checkered with as many colours as the patchwork counterpane of Mrs. Pipelet. The porter's salutation of Rudolph was not without a certain mixture of affability; but, alas! the smile was melancholy, and his whole manner bespoke the man with "a silent sorrow here."

"Alfred, this gentleman wishes to take the room and closet on the fourth floor," said Mrs. Pipelet, presenting Rudolph to her husband; "and we have waited for you to drink a glass of bitter, which the gentleman has sent for."

This delicate attention on the part of Rudolph at once won the heart of Alfred Pipelet; who, raising his hand to the front of the brim of his hat, said, in a bass voice, that would have done honour to a cathedral singer, "We shall, I hope, satisfy the gentleman as porters, and the gentleman will, doubtless, satisfy us as a lodger—birds of a feather flock together." Then suddenly interrupting himself, Pipelet said to Rudolph in a tone of anxiety, "Provided that the gentleman is not a painter!"

"No; I am a merchant's clerk,"

"Then, sir, my humble service to you. I congratulate you that Nature did not make you one of those monsters called artists."

"Artists—monsters?" inquired Rudolph.

Pipelet made no reply, save raising his clasped hands towards the ceiling, gave utterance to a rending groan.

"I must tell you that it is painters who have embittered Alfred's life, it is they who have crushed my old dear one till he has sunk into what you behold him!" whispered Mrs. Pipelet to Rudolph. Then she continued in a louder tone, and with a comforting voice, "Come, Alfred, be reasonable; do not think of that villain; you will make yourself ill, and not be able to eat your dinner."

"No! I will have firmness and reason," said Pipelet, with a sad and dignified resignation; "he has done me much harm: he has been my persecutor, my torturer, for a long, long time; but *now* I despise him! Painters!" added he, turning to Rudolph, "Oh, sir! they are the plague, the pest of a house—they are its ruin, its destruction!"

"So you have had a painter lodging with you?"

"Alas! yes, sir; we have indeed had one,"

said Pipelet, bitterly; "a painter, too, whose name was Cabrion!" At this remembrance, despite his apparent meekness, the porter convulsively clenched his fists.

"Was he the last occupant of the apartment that I am about to take?" inquired Rudolph.

"No, no; the last lodger who had it was a worthy, excellent young man, named Germain; his predecessor was Cabrion. Oh, sir! since his departure, this Cabrion has driven me almost stark staring mad."

"Have you then so much regretted him?" asked Rudolph.

"Regretted Cabrion!" exclaimed the astounded porter; "regret Cabrion! Picture this to yourself, sir. M. Red Arm paid him two months' rent to get rid of him, for we had been unfortunate enough to let him the room on an agreement. A sweet agreement! You have no idea, sir, of the horrible tricks that he played upon us and the lodgers. To give you a single instance of his villany—there is not a wind instrument which he has not made his accomplice in the crime of disturbing the lodgers! Yes, from the 'horn of the hunter heard on the hill' down to the fife, he has abused all of them; carrying his villany so far as deliberately to play out of tune the same note for two hours at a time. It was enough to drive any one mad! More than twenty petitions were sent to M. Red Arm, to expel the wretch. At last he got rid of him by paying two months' rent. That's droll, isn't it, for a landlord to pay rent to his lodger? But it would have been better to pay him three months than allow him to stay. Well, he went; and then you would suppose that there was an end of Cabrion. I will show you. Next night, at eleven o'clock, I had just gone to bed, when rap! rap! rap! I pulled the string, and some one came to the lodge, and said, 'Good evening, porter; will you give me a lock of your hair, if you please?' My wife said to me, 'It is some drunken dog who has mistaken the door.' So I replied to the stranger, 'It is not here; try next door.' 'But is not this No. 17, and is not the porter's name Pipelet?' continued the voice. 'Yes,' said I, 'my name is Pipelet, certainly.' 'Well, then, Pipelet, my boy, I have come to beg a lock of your hair for Cabrion; it is a fancy he has taken, and he will not be denied.'"

As he uttered these words, Pipelet gazed at Rudolph with a mournful shake of the head, mechanically folding his arms, the very personification of woe on a monument.

"Yes, sir, do you see," continued Pipelet, "he sends to me, his mortal enemy, whom he has overwhelmed with injury and insult, and impudently asks for a lock of my hair; a favour which ladies often refuse to an accepted lover!"

"But supposing this Cabrion had been as good a lodger as M. Germain?" returned Rudolph, with imperturbable coolness.

"Had he been the best lodger that ever entered house, I would not have given him a lock of my hair," majestically replied the man of the chimney-pot hat! "it is against my principles and habits—but in that case, I should have considered it a duty to have refused him with all possible politeness."

"And that is not all," chimed in the portress;—"only imagine our position, sir; from that day forth, we have had no peace, morning, noon, or night; that frightful Cabrion sends a swarm of blackguards like himself, who come here one after the other, at all hours and at all times, to ask Alfred for a lock of his hair; and always for Cabrion!"

"Oh, sir!" sighed Pipelet, "had I committed the most dreadful crimes, I could not have my slumbers more cruelly disturbed. Every instant I awake with a start, expecting to hear the voice of that accursed Cabrion. I suspect everybody that approaches me; in every one I see a tormentor who seeks a lock of my hair. I have lost all the natural sweetness of my manner, and have become gloomy, suspicious, and crabbed, and as fretful as a porcupine's quills. That infernal Cabrion has poisoned my existence!"

And Pipelet, heaving a profound sigh, bowed down his chimney-pot beaver under the weight of his mighty misery.

"I can now understand your dislike to painters," said Rudolph, "but the M. Germain of whom you have spoken made you some amends for this Cabrion!"

"Oh, yes, sir! he was a kind, good young man; free as the day—so obliging, and so gay—but then his gaiety was kept within proper bounds, and was of the right sort, and did no harm to any one—not like that of the wretch Cabrion, who I wish the devil may pitchfork!"

"Come, come, calm yourself, my dear M. Pipelet; and don't use such violent language. Who, now, is the happy housekeeper to that excellent yonng man, that pattern of lodgers, M. Germain?"

"No one knows, or will know, where he now lodges—that is to say, with the exception of Miss Dimpleton."

"And who is Miss Dimpleton?" asked Rudolph.

"A little needlewoman, the other lodger on the fourth floor," replied Mrs. Pipelet; "there's another jewel of a lodger; always pays her rent in advance, and keeps her little place so clean, and is so obliging to every one, and as gay and happy as a lark. Industrious, too; always fagging away, like a little beaver; sometimes earning as much as two francs a day—but that's by going it hammer and tongs."

"But how happens it that Miss Dimpleton is the only one acquainted with the present residence of M. Germain?"

"When he left the house," returned Mrs. Pipelet, "he said to us: 'I do not expect any

letters; but if by chance any should come for me, you will give them to Miss Dimpleton.' And she would be well worthy this confidence, even were it an unpaid money-letter—wouldn't she, Alfred?"

"The fact is, that there would not be a syllable to say against Miss Dimpleton," said the porter sternly, "if she had not had the weakness to allow herself to be cajoled by that atrocious Cabrion."

"Oh, as to that, Alfred," replied the portress, "you know very well that their intimacy was quite harmless—although a few jokes might pass between them. For although Miss Dimpleton is so merry and good-natured, she is as prudent as I am myself. You should see the strong bolt on the inside of her door! If her next-door neighbour *will* make love to her, that's no fault of the little girl; it's entirely owing to the situation. For it was just the same with the travelling clerk who had the room before Cabrion, as after that infamous painter it was with M. Germain. Again I say, there is no harm in that; it arises from their being next door to each other, which naturally brings about a little love-making, but nothing further."

"Oh," said Rudolph, "then I suppose whoever lodges in the room I am about to take, must, as a matter of course, make love to Miss Dimpleton?"

"Of course, sir; how can you be on neighbourly terms without? the two rooms are adjoining each other. Well, between two young people there is always something wanted—a light or a bit of live coal, or a match, or a drop of water; and as for water, Miss Dimpleton is never short of that. It is her luxury, she is a regular little duck; the moment that she is at leisure, she washes her floor and her hearth; and so everything about her is so clean! You will see that——"

"So M. Germain, taking the locality into account, was a good neighbour to Miss Dimpleton?"

"Yes, sir: it would not be too much to say that they were born for each other. So polite, so young, it was quite a pleasure to see them come downstairs together on Sundays to take a walk; it was the only holiday the poor things had! She, prettily set off in a smart little cap, and a nice neat gown at twenty-five sous the ell, which, though she had made herself, became her like a little queen; and he looking like a born gentleman!"

"And M. Germain has not seen Miss Dimpleton since he left this house?"

"No, sir, unless he has seen her on Sundays; for on other days Miss Dimpleton has no time to think of sweethearting, I assure you. She gets up at five or six o'clock in the morning, and works till ten, and sometimes eleven, at night. She never leaves her room, except in the morning, to buy provisions for herself and her two little finches, the three of them put together don't eat much. What do they need? A penn'orth of milk, a little bread, a bunch of chickweed, some salad, bird-seed, and clear fresh water; and upon that they chirrup and sing so merrily, the girl and her two birds, that it's as good as a blessing to hear them. And then, she is kind and charitable; that is, as far as her means go—she bestows her time and her cares on others: for, though working twelve hours a day, she is barely able to support herself. Oh! those poor wretches in the attics, whom Red Arm will turn into the street in a day or two at the very farthest; many and many a night, have Miss Dimpleton and M. Germain watched over those poor creatures' children!"

"There is an unfortunate family here, then?"

"Unfortunate, sir? Great heaven! they are, indeed, unfortunate. Five young children, the mother at the point of death, and confined to her bed, the grandmother an idiot: and to support all these, the labour of one poor man, who scarcely tastes bread through the weary hours, though he slaves like a nigger: yet he's a first-rate workman. Three hours sleep in twenty-four is all he will allow himself: and then what sleep! broken by his hungry children, who cry, 'Give us bread! Bread, father!' by the groans of his poor, sick wife, tossing on her miserable straw bed, or by the idiotic screams of his wretched mother, who will sometimes howl like a wolf, from sheer hunger—for she has no more sense than an animal—and when she is very hungry, we hear her down the stairs; she howls like——"

"Why this is dreadful!" cried Rudolph. "And does no one assist these poor creatures?"

"Oh, sir! we do as much for them as poor people can. Since the Commander has given me his twelve francs a month, for looking after his room, I have boiled my pot once a week, and then these poor creatures always have some soup. Miss Dimpleton, too, breaks her night's rest, at the expense of candles, to make night-clothes and petticoats for the poor children, out of her ends and cuttings of stuff. Then poor M. Germain, though he wasn't too well off, pretended every now and then to receive some bottles of wine from his friends, and Morel—that's the poor workman's name—used to take a good drink or two, which warmed his heart, and gave him his heart again."

"And did the working dentist do nothing for these poor creatures?"

"M. Bradamanti?" said the porter. "He cured my rheumatics, it is true, and for that I venerate him; but, since that day, I said to my wife: 'Anastasia—M. Bradamanti—ahem!' Didn't I say that to you, Anastasia?"

"Exactly; that is what you said to me."

"Well, and what did he do?"

"I'll tell you, sir. When we told M. Bra-

damanti about the misery of the poor Morels, on account of his complaining of the screams of the old idiot when she was howling with hunger all one night, he said to me: 'Since they are so much distressed, if they have any teeth that want drawing, I will not even make them pay for the sixth.'"

"Decidedly, Mrs. Pipelet," said Rudolph, "I have a bad opinion of that man. And the female pawnbroker, has she been more charitable?"

"Hum! After M. Bradamanti's style," said the portress. "She has lent them money on their wretched goods. All has passed into her hands, even to the last mattress, and that was no burden: they never had but two."

"And now aids them no further?"

"Mother Burette! Bless you, she is as complete a hard case in her way as her lover in his; for, between you and I," added the portress, "M. Red Arm and Mother Burette are——" and the old woman gave a knowing wink of the eye, and a spiteful shake of the head.

"You don't say so?" said Rudolph.

"Oh! upon my life I think so. Midsummer hares are as mad as March hares; ain't they, my old darling?"

Pipelet's sole reply was a melancholy shake of the head, which gave a corresponding motion to the brim of his hat. As for Mrs. Pipelet, since she had shown some charitable feeling for the unhappy family, she had become somewhat less repulsive in Rudolph's eyes, who asked: "And what is this poor workman's trade?"

"A maker of bogus jewellery. He works by the piece; and pretty well round-shouldered working by the piece has made him. After all, a man is only a man, he can do no more than he can, can he? And when he has to give a crust to a family of seven people besides himself, he has a tough job of it! Yet his eldest daughter helps him all she can—though that is but little, very little."

"How old is this daughter?"

"About eighteen, and very handsome, too. She is servant to a miserly old hunks, rich enough, they say, to buy all Paris; he is a notary, named M. Jacques Ferrand."

"Ferrand!" said Rudolph, amazed at this new coincidence; for it was from this notary, or at least from his housekeeper, that he expected information relative to Goualeuse. "M. Jacques Ferrand, who lives in the Rue du Sentier?" added he.

"The same, sir; do you know him?"

"He is the notary of the house of business to which I belong."

"Oh! then you must know what a famous money-grubber he is. But, let us be just to the man. He is extremely charitable and devout. He goes every Sunday to mass and vespers, keeps the fasts, and goes regularly to confession; if he feasts, he feasts only with the priests, eating blessed bread, and drinking holy water. A saint of a man, eh? but as avaricious and hard-hearted towards others as he is towards himself. It is eighteen months since poor Louisa, the daughter of the lapidary, went to live with him. She is a very lamb in mildness, but a horse at hard work. She's slavey there, and has only eighteen francs wages, neither more nor less. She keeps six francs a month for herself, and all the rest she gives to her brothers and sisters. It is something, that; but what is it when there are seven mouths to feed!"

"But what does the father earn, if he is so very industrious?"

"Industrious! The poor fellow is the steadiest of men; never took his drop: he suffers all like a martyr; and his only prayer seems to be, that each day should be forty-eight hours long, that he might earn a little more bread for his family."

"His labour must be very ill paid, then?"

"Why, the poor fellow has been confined to his bed for three months, which is the cause of his being thrown back so much. His wife ruined her own health in nursing him, and she is now fast dying. For these three months he has been obliged to live upon poor Louisa's twelve francs, what they could borrow on pledges from Mother Burette, and a few crowns lent to him by the mock-jewel dealer for whom he works. But, eight people! that's what I cannot help thinking of. And to see the hole they live in! But I must not speak of that, sir, for our dinner is ready, and only to think about that filthy garret would turn my stomach. Happily, M. Red Arm is going to turn them out of the house. When I say happily, I don't say it out of any ill-will to the poor creatures, I can assure you. But as these Morels are so very wretched, and we can do nothing to prevent it, it is as well that they should be wretched elsewhere. It will be an eyesore the less to us."

"But, if turned out of here, where will they go?"

"My! that's what I really don't know."

"And how much can this poor man earn a day?"

"If he were not obliged to attend on his mother, his wife, and the children, he could earn three or four francs, working so hard as he does; but as he loses three-fourths of his time in household work, it is doing well if he makes forty sous."

"That is indeed little, poor souls!"

"Yes, it is easy to say poor souls! But there are so many poor creatures, that as one cannot help them all, we must console ourselves as well as we can—isn't that about it, Alfred? Oh! talking of consolation, you have not tasted your bitters."

"Why, to say the truth, Mrs. Pipelet, what you have told me has so affected me, that—— But you and M. Pipelet will be good enough to drink my health."

"You are very kind, sir," said the porter; "but would you like to go up and look at the room?"

"Willingly; and, if it suits me, I will pay you a deposit."

The porter left his den, followed by Rudolph.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FOUR FLOORS.

THE dark and damp staircase seemed doubly dingy on this gloomy winter's day. The entrance to each of the apartments of this house had, to the observant eye, a physiognomy peculiar to itself. Thus, the door which led to the commander's abode was freshly painted of a brown colour, grained in imitation of wainscot; a copper-gilt handle shone on the lock, and a handsome bell-rope, with a red silk tassel, was in striking contrast with the mouldy antiquity of the walls.

The door of the second story, inhabited by the fortune-teller and pawnbroker, presented a singular aspect. A stuffed owl, a bird signally cabalistic and symbolical, was nailed over the room-door by the feet and wings; and a little wicket latticed with iron wire, enabled those within to examine their visitors previous to admitting them.

The dwelling of the Italian quack doctor, who was suspected of pursuing a frightful avocation, was also distinguished by the strangeness of the entrance. His name was done in horses' teeth, inlaid on a tablet of black wood, screwed on the panels; and the bell-rope, instead of the classic termination of a hare's or a deer's foot, was appended to the wire by the dried fore-arm of an ape; this withered limb, with its five articulated fingers and its perfect nails, had something of the horrible in its appearance. One might have taken it for the hand of a child!

As Rudolph passed by this ominous-looking door, he fancied that he heard the sound of smothered sobs; then, all at once, an agonized, convulsive, horrible cry, which seemed as if wrung from the inmost soul of some wretched sufferer, awakened the echoes of that silent house. Rudolph shuddered: then, quick as thought, he rushed to the door, and pulled the bell violently.

"What ails you, sir?" asked the astonished porter.

"That cry!" said Rudolph; "did you not hear it?"

"Yes, sir, I heard it; no doubt it is one of M. Cæsar's patients having a tooth drawn—or perhaps two."

This explanation seemed plausible, but it did not satisfy Rudolph. He had rung the bell violently; yet no one came to answer him. He could hear several doors shut in succession; and through a glass bull's-eye which was above the door, Rudolph indistinctly saw a haggard, cadaverous, and pallid countenance. A perfect forest of wild, red hair crowned that hideous visage, which was fringed below by a long beard of the same colour. This hideous face disappeared in a moment. Rudolph felt completely petrified.

Brief as had been the vision, he believed that he recognized those features. Those green eyes, that shone bright as aqua-marine beneath those staring and yellow eyebrows—that livid paleness—that slender and prominent aquiline nose, the nostrils of which, strangely dilated and arched outward, exposed the nasal septum—reminded him in a fearful manner of a certain Polidori, whose name had been so execrated by Murphy in his conversation with Baron de Graün. Although Rudolph had not seen Polidori for sixteen or seventeen years, he had a thousand reasons for not forgetting him: the only thing that contradicted his remembrance, was, that the man, whom he fancied he saw in the person of this fair-skinned and red-haired quack, was extremely dark. If Rudolph (supposing his conjectures to be correct) felt no surprise at finding a man whose learning, great talent, and intelligence, he knew, fallen to such a state of degradation, perhaps, of infamy—it was because he also knew that these rare and noble gifts were allied to so much perversity, such wild, unbridled passions, desires so foul, and, beyond all, to such an affected scorn and contempt of the world, as might induce this man, when overtaken by want, to prefer degraded and dishonourable modes of subsistence; nay, even to enjoy a fiendish satisfaction that he was hiding beneath his ignoble pursuits the precious treasures of a highly-gifted mind. But, we must repeat that, although he had last seen Polidori in the prime of life, and although he must be about the same age as the charlatan, there were still between the two persons certain differences so remarkable, that Rudolph remained in great doubt as to whether they were one and the same person. At length, turning to Pipelet, he inquired—"Has M. Bradamanti long resided in this house?"

"About a year, sir; now I recollect, he came in January quarter. He is a very punctual lodger; he cured my dreadful rheumatism——"

"Mrs. Pipelet tells me that there are certain horrible reports about him."

"She has told you of them?"

"Make yourself quite easy; I am very discreet."

"Well, sir, I don't believe there's the least truth in these reports—and I never will believe it—I trust I have too much modesty to do anything of the kind," rejoined Pipelet, blushing, and preceding his new lodger to the next landing-place.

More than ever resolved to clear up his doubts—feeling that Polidori's presence in the same house might greatly interfere with his projects, and experiencing a growing inclination to put the worst interpretation on the horrible cry he had heard, Rudolph resolved to assure himself of this man's iden-

tity, and followed the porter to the upper story, where was situated the apartment he wished to rent.

Miss Dimpleton's lodging, next-door neighbour to the chamber for which Rudolph was in treaty, was easily recognized, thanks to a charming gallantry of the painter who has been described as the mortal foe of Pipelet. Half-a-dozen chubby little Cupids, very freely and spiritedly painted in the style of Watteau, were grouped about a shield. One held a thimble, another a pair of scissors, another a flat-iron, and another a hand-glass; and in the midst of them, in pink letters on a sky-blue ground, was "Miss Dimpleton, dress-maker;" the whole being surrounded by a garland of flowers, which stood out in admirable relief from the sea-green colour of the door. This beautiful little panel had all the better effect from its strong contrast with the filthiness of the staircase.

At the risk of opening afresh Alfred's wounds, Rudolph said, pointing to the door:

"That, I suppose, is the work of M. Cabrion?"

"Yes, sir; he took the liberty of spoiling the painting of the door, by daubing it over with those fat, indecent brats, stark naked, which he called 'Coopids.' If it hadn't been for the entreaties of Miss Dimpleton, and M. Red Arm's weakness, I would have scratched all that out, as I also would this palette, filled with horrid-looking monsters, amongst whom you may detect their equally abominable creator—you may know him by his sugar-loaf hat."

And there, sure enough, on the door of the room Rudolph was about to engage, might be seen a palette surrounded by all sorts of odd, strange-looking figures, the witty conceit of which might have done honour to Callot. Rudolph followed the porter into a good-sized room, which communicated with a small bedroom, and was lighted by two windows which opened upon the Rue du Temple. Some wild fancies, which had been painted on the same door, had been scrupulously respected by M. Germain. Rudolph had many reasons for wishing to occupy this aprrtment; therefore, modestly placing in the porter's hand forty *sous*, he said to him:—

"This apartment exactly suits me; here is the deposit. I will send my furniture in to-morrow. But let me beg of you not to efface that palette. It is so very funny. Don't you think so?"

"Funny! Oh, sir! I have seen every one of those monsters in my nightmares; hunting me, sir, in my dreams, with Cabrion at the head of them, till I have awoke in a cold sweat: oh, there was a horrid chase!"

"I can imagine that they were not pleasant visitors. But tell me, have I any need to see your M. Red Arm about the hiring of this apartment?"

"No, sir; he seldom comes here, except now and then on business with Mother Burette. I always treat directly with the lodgers. I will only further trouble you for your name?"

"Rudolph."

"Rudolph what?"

"Plain Rudolph, M. Pipelet."

"I'm satisfied, sir; I did not ask from idle curiosity—names and inclinations are free."

"Tell me, M. Pipelet, cannot I call to-morrow upon poor Morel, as a next neighbour, to ask if I can be of any use to him, since my predecessor, M. Germain, was so good to him?"

"Oh, yes, sir, that can be done; it is true that will not be of much use to him, as they are to be turned out; but still it will ease his mind." Then, as if struck with a sudden thought, Pipelet, looking slyly at his new lodger, said: "I understand, I understand: it is a beginning, so that you can also call by-and-by, with a good grace, upon the little neighbour next door!"

"Oh! I reckon upon that as certain."

"There is no harm in that, sir—it is the custom—understand, I mean honourably; and I am sure Miss Dimpleton has heard us in the room, and is in a fever to see us go down again. I will make a noise on purpose with the key, and if you look behind, you will see her watching us. And, sure enough, Rudolph perceived that the door, which was so handsomely decorated with the Cupids à la Watteau, was ajar, and, through the narrow opening, he could see the turn-up tip of a little rosy nose, and a large inquisitive black eye; but, as he slackened his step, the door suddenly slammed to. "Did I not tell you, sir, that she was watching us?" said the porter; then he added: "Pray excuse me, one moment, while I step into my warehouse."

"Where is that?"

"At the top of that ladder is the landing upon which opens the door of Morel's garret, and behind a panel of the wainscot is a little dark hole, where I keep my leather: the partition is so warped and full of cracks, that I can see and hear there as if I was in their room. It is not, God knows, that I wish to act the spy upon them—on the contrary. But pray excuse me for a minute or two, sir, while I get my bit of leather. If you will be good enough to step down stairs, I will rejoin you."

And so saying, Pipelet began to mount the crazy ladder, an ascent which seemed perilous at his years.

Rudolph threw a last glance at Miss Dimpleton's door, as he reflected that that young girl, the companion of poor Goualeuse, was doubtless acquainted with the retreat of the Schoolmaster's son, when he heard some one in the lower story come out of the apartment of the charlatan; he distinguished the light step of a female, and the rustle of a silk dress. Rudolph stopped for an instant, lest he should intrude. Hearing no more, he went down. Ar-

rived at the second landing-place, he saw and picked up a handkerchief that lay upon the lower stair—doubtless it belonged to the female who had just left the lodging of Polidori. He took it to one of the narrow staircase windows, and examined it. It was magnificently trimmed with costly lace, and embroidered in one of the corners were the initials L. N., surmounted by a ducal coronet. The handkerchief was literally soaked with tears. Rudolph's first impulse was to follow the person from whose hand this mute evidence of grief had fallen, with the intention of restoring it; but reflecting that such a step might be taken for impertinent curiosity, he determined to keep it as the first link in the chain of a mysterious adventure, in which he had found himself suddenly and unintentionally involved. On arriving at the porter's lodge, he said to Mrs. Pipelet: "Did not a *female* come down stairs just now?"

"No, sir—but a very fine *lady*, tall and slender, in a large black veil did. She came from the apartment of M. Bradamanti. Little Hoppy went for a coach, in which the lady has just gone away. But what astonished me was to see that little blackguard get up behind the coach. I dare say, though, it was to see where the lady goes to; for he is as mischievous as a magpie, and active as a ferret, spite of his club-foot."

"So, then," thought Rudolph, "the charlatan will most likely discover this lady's name and address, since doubtless it is he who has ordered Hoppy to follow her."

"Well, sir, does your room suit you?" asked the portress.

"It suits me excellently! I have hired it: to-morrow I will send in my furniture."

"May heaven bless you for coming by our door, sir; we shall have one good lodger the more."

"I hope so, Mrs. Pipelet. It is understood that you will see to my little domestic affairs. To-morrow my goods will be brought. I will see them arranged myself." And Rudolph left the lodge.

The results of his visit to the house of the Rue du Temple were sufficiently important, alike to the solution of the mystery he hoped to penetrate, and to the noble curiosity with which he found out every occasion of doing good, and of preventing evil. On reflection, he thought he had achieved the following results: That Miss Dimpleton *must* be acquainted with the residence of François Germain, the Schoolmaster's son. A young woman, who, according to some appearances, might unfortunately be the Marchioness d'Harville, had made, for the morrow, an appointment with the Commander, which might ruin her for ever; and, for a thousand reasons, Rudolph took a most lively interest in his friend D'Harville, whose peace and honour seemed so cruelly compromized.

An honest and laborious artizan, crushed by the most frightful misery, was about to be turned into the street with his family by Red Arm.

Further, Rudolph had involuntarily come upon some traces of an adventure in which the charlatan, Cæsar Bradamanti (perhaps Polidori), and a lady, who appeared to be of rank and fashion, were the chief actors.

And lastly, the Owl, recently emerged from the hospital, to which she had been taken after the scene in the Allée des Veuves, had some very suspicious communications with Mother Burette, fortune-teller and money-lender, who occupied the second floor of this house.

Having carefully noted these points of information, Rudolph returned to his house in the Rue Plumet, deferring to the following day his visit to the notary, Ferrand. That same evening, as we have already heard, Rudolph was to be at a grand ball at the * * * Embassy.

Before following our hero upon this new excursion, let us cast a retrospective glance upon Lady Macgregor and her brother—important personages in the development of this story.

CHAPTER XXV.

THOMAS AND SARAH.

SARAH SEYTON, at this time widow of the Earl Macgregor, and thirty-seven or thirty-eight years of age, belonged to a noble Scotch family; and was daughter of a baronet. Of rare beauty, Sarah, left an orphan at seventeen years of age, had quitted Scotland in the company of her brother, Sir Thomas Seyton-of-Halsbury. The absurd predictions of an old Highland nurse had excited, almost to insanity, the two cardinal vices of Sarah's mind—pride and ambition, by prophesying for her, with an incredible obstinacy and persistence, the very highest destinies; in a word, sovereign rank. The young Scotch lady at last yielded herself up to a full belief in the predictions of her nurse; and she constantly repeated, in order to justify her own ambitious belief, that a fortune-teller, under similar circumstances, had promised a crown to the beauteous and excellent creole,* who afterwards sat on the Napoleonic throne of France—and who was as much an empress by her grace and goodness of heart, as others have been by magnificence and majesty.

Strange to say, Seyton, superstitious as his sister, encouraged her extravagant hopes, resolved to consecrate his life to the realization of Sarah's dream—though as dazzling as preposterous. Nevertheless, the brother and sister were not sufficiently blinded to take

* The allusion is to Josephine Beauharnois, the first wife of Napoleon, who was born in the island of Martinique; it is needless to say more than that she deserved every eulogy which poet or romancist may bestow. The tradition of her nurse's prophecy is to be found in the various memoirs of this admirable woman.

the prediction of the seer in its precise and literal sense, and to look absolutely for a throne of the first order, in lofty disdain of second-rate royalty, or of sovereign princes: provided that a regal crown should one day encircle the brow of the Scottish beauty, the proud couple were willing to shut their eyes upon the actual power of that crown. Aided by the *Almanach de Gotha*, for the year of grace 1819, Seyton, on leaving Scotland, arranged a sort of synoptical table, in which he set down, in order of seniority, all the unmarried kings and sovereign princes of Europe.

Although extremely absurd, the ambition of brother and sister was at least free from all dishonourable intentions. Seyton was fully prepared to aid his sister in matrimonially entangling any crown-wearer whomsoever; he was perfectly willing to participate with her in all the schemes and intrigues which might tend to the success of her plans: but he would far rather have killed the sister he so devoutedly loved, than have seen her become the mistress of a prince, even with the certainty of subsequent marriage.

The sort of matrimonial inventory which resulted from Seyton's study of the *Almanach de Gotha*, presented a very satisfactory aspect. The Germanic Confederation, especially, furnished a numerous array of young sovereigns-presumptive. Sir Thomas was not ignorant of the facilities offered by the German species of marriage called *left-handed;* to which, as being legitimate to a certain extent, he would, as a last resource, have resigned his sister. It was decided, therefore, that Germany should be the first ground of their "drawing."

If such a project appears improbable, such hopes absurd, let us remark that an unbridled ambition, exaggerated by a superstitious credulity, rarely prides itself upon the especial reasonableness of its views, and is seldom excited by anything less than what appears impossible; and, moreover, remembering certain contemporaneous occurrences, from august and respectable *morganatic* marriages, between sovereigns and subjects, down to the amorous Odyssey of Miss Penelope and the Prince of Capua, one cannot deny some possibility of success to the matrimonial imaginings of Sir Thomas and Sarah. Let us add, that the latter, to rare beauty and a singular aptitude of acquiring various accomplishments, united a seductiveness the more dangerous inasmuch as an unfeeling and calculating soul, or cunning and selfish disposition, a deep hypocrisy, a stubborn and despotic will, lay hidden beneath the specious externals of a generous, warm, and impassioned nature.

Her physical organization was not less deceptive than her moral. Her large black eyes, by turns languishing and sparkling beneath their ebon lashes, could feign to admiration all the kindling fires of voluptuousness! yet the burning pulses of love beat not in her frozen bosom; never could a surprise of either the heart or the senses derange the stern and rigid calculations of this intriguing, egotistical, and ambitious girl. On reaching the Continent, she resolved, previous to embarking on her adventures, to stay for a time in Paris, for the purpose of polishing her style, and softening the stiffness of manner common to English society, by mingling with a people full of elegance, refinement, and the freedom of perfect taste. Sarah had the *entrée* of the very highest circles, favoured as she was by powerful letters of introduction, and by the kind patronage of the Britannic ambassadress, and of the old Marquis d'Harville, who had known the father of the Seytons in England.

Heartless, cold, and designing people have a wonderful knack of accommodating their language and manners to company, habits, and sentiments the most diametrically opposed to their true character. With such people all is surface, varnish, rind, mere appearance: and as they feel conscious that if once seen through they are lost, the sort of self-protective instinct with which they are endowed, makes them fully appreciate the vital importance of this moral disguise: hence they "make up" and "get up" their assumed characters with all the talent of the most practised comedian. Thus it was, that after six months' residence in Paris, Sarah was qualified to compete with the most Parisian of Parisian ladies, for the piquant gracefulness of her wit, the charming gaiety of her temper, the skilful adaptation of her coquetry to time, place, persons, and the exciting and winning simplicity of her at once chaste and impassioned glance. Seeing that his sister was now sufficiently *armed*, Seyton set out with her for Germany, abundantly provided with excellent letters of introduction. The first state of the Germanic Confederation upon the itinerary arranged by Tom and Sarah, was the Grand Duchy of Gerolstein, thus styled in the diplomatic and infallible *Almanach de Gotha*, for the year 1819:—

"*Genealogy of the Sovereigns of Europe, and their Families.*"

"GEROLSTEIN.

"*Grand Duke:* Maximilian Rudolph, born 10th of December, 1764; succeeded his father, Charles Frederic Rudolph, 21st of April, 1785. Widower, January, 1808, by decease of Louisa-Amelia, daughter of John Augustus, Prince of Burglen.

"*Son:* Gustavus Rudolph, born 17th of April, 1803.

"*Mother:* Dowager Grand Duchess Judith; widow of the Grand Duke Charles Frederic Rudolph, 21st April, 1785.

Seyton, very judiciously, had given precedence on his list to the youngest of the princes among whom he wished to find a brother-in-law, thinking that extreme youth is more easily seduced than mature age

Besides, as we have already said, the brother and sister were especially recommended to the reigning Grand Duke of Gerolstein by the old Marquis d'Harville, who, like every one else, was greatly prejudiced in favour of Sarah, whose beauty, grace, and charming simplicity of manners, he could not sufficiently admire.

It is needless to say, that the heir-presumptive to the Grand Duchy of Gerolstein was Gustavus Rudolph, who, at the period at which the Seytons were presented at the court of his father, was scarcely eighteen years of age. The arrival of the young and lovely Scotch lady was quite an event in this petty German court—so calm, so simple, we may almost say, so patriarchal. The grand duke, one of the best of men, governed his state with wise firmness and paternal kindness; nothing could materially or morally exceed the happiness of this little state; its grave, sober, pious, and laborious population, presented the ideal type of German character. These excellent people enjoyed so complete a happiness, and were so satisfied with their condition, that the enlightened solicitude of their grand duke had experienced little trouble in preserving them from the mania of *constitutional* innovations. As regarded modern discoveries of a different order, as regarded practical ideas calculated to have a salutary influence upon the welfare and the moral improvement of his people, the grand duke was incessant in his inquiries after and in his adoption of them; indeed, the principal duty of his ministers at the various courts of Europe may be said to have been that of constantly keeping their sovereign fully informed of the progress of science and the arts as they bear upon public utility.

We have stated that the grand duke felt equal affection and gratitude for the Marquis d'Harville, who, in 1815, had rendered him immense services; and, consequently, thanks to the recommendation of the Marquis d'Harville, Lady Macgregor and her brother were received at the court of Gerolstein with peculiar kindness and distinction. A fortnight after her arrival here, the young lady, endowed with a keen spirit of observation, had easily penetrated the firm, honourable, and frank character of the grand duke. Before entrapping the affections of the son, it was infallibly certain that she must make sure of the goodwill of the father. Although he appeared passionately attached to his son, she soon perceived that the firm and upright duke, tender father as he was, would never depart from certain fixed principles—from certain ideas upon the duties of princes: and that he would never consent to that which he might consider "marriage beneath him;" more especially as his attachment to these principles did not arise from mere pride, but from conscience, reason, and dignity. For a man of his energetic stamp, the kinder and more affectionate he is, so much is he the more firm and resolute, and never concedes any portion of what touches his conscience, reason, or dignity.

Sarah was upon the point of abandoning her matrimonial design upon his only son and heir to his sovereignty, seeing these almost insurmountable obstacles; but reflecting that, on the other hand, Rudolph was very young, and was said to be extremely kind, gentle, of a thoughtful retiring disposition, she came to the conclusion that he was probably weak and irresolute. She, consequently, persisted in her project and in her hopes.

Her generalship and that of her brother at this juncture was of a masterly character. The young lady, on her part, conciliated the good feelings of the whole court, and more especially of those personages who might have been jealous or envious of her advantages; she caused all around to forget her grace and beauty by veiling them beneath an exquisitely skilful assumption of simplicity. She soon became the idol not only of the grand duke, but also of his mother, the dowager grand duchess Judith, who, in spite of, or because of, her ninety years of age, was passionately fond of having herself surrounded by youth and beauty.

Sarah and her brother from time to time talked of the necessity for their departure, The sovereign of Gerolstein would not hear it; and that he might completely attach the two to him, he pressed on Sir Thomas the acceptance of the vacant post of Master of the Horse, and entreated Sarah not to quit the grand duchess Judith, who could no longer live without her. After many hesitations and objections, which were combated by as many pressing inducements, the Seytons accepted the brilliant offers that were made to them, and established themselves at the court of Gerolstein, at which they had been presented but two months before.

Sarah, an accomplished musician, knowing the taste of the dowager grand duchess for the old masters, and, among them, for Gluck, procured the works of that great composer, and completed the fascination of the aged princess by her untiring good temper, and the admirable ability with which she sang those old airs of such simple and expressive beauty. On his part, Sir Thomas was able to render very real services in the department to which the grand duke had appointed him. He was a good judge of horses; possessed great method and firmness; and by the exercise of these gifts he speedily remodelled and brought about a complete reform in the stable department of the grand duke, which, from neglect and red-tapery, had been reduced to a state of disorder and inefficiency.

The brother and sister were soon equally honoured and in request by all of this court; for the approval and affection of the sovereign were imitated by the courtiers. Sarah was too conscious of the value of every support to her projects that she could command for them,

to fail in employing to the utmost her seductive skill in gaining partizans. Her hypocrisy, exhibited in the most attractive forms, readily deceived the majority of these simple, honest Germans, and the extreme partiality of the grand duke was very soon sealed by the general favour.

Behold then the ambitious brother and sister firmly and honourably established at the court of the grand duke, before a word had been said about young Prince Rudolph. By a fortunate chance, only a few days subsequent to Sarah's arrival, the young prince had left the court for the purpose of inspecting some troops, acccompanied by an aide-de-camp and the faithful Murphy. This absence, doubly favourable to the views of Sarah, allowed her at her leisure to arrange the meshes of the net matrimonial, without being interrupted by the presence of the young prince, whose too evident admiration might probably have awakened the fears of the grand duke. Unfortunately, however, in the absence of his son, he never reflected that he was admitting to his family circle, a young girl of rare and exquisite beauty, and of a fascinating mind, as Rudolph would not fail to discover in his hourly interviews.

Sarah remained perfectly insensible to this reception, so touchingly generous : to this noble confidence, which thus introduced her into the bosom of this sovereign family. Neither she nor her brother shrunk for a moment from their evil designs ; they came with preconcerted plans, to sow trouble and sorrow in this peaceful and happy family. They coldly calculated the probable results of the cruel differences which they were sowing between a father and son hitherto so tenderly united.

It may here be necessary to take a retrospective glance, and to revert to Rudolph's early years.

During his infancy, he had been of a very delicate constitution; and his father reasoned thereon in this somewhat strange manner : "English country gentlemen are, generally speaking, remarkable for their robust health. This vast advantage is, in a great measure, owing to their physical training ; simple, rough, and rural, it develops all their vigour. Rudolph must leave the hands of women; his constitution is delicate : perhaps by accustoming this youth to live (with few exceptions) like the son of an English farmer, I shall strengthen his constitution.

The grand duke accordingly sent to England to seek a man able and worthy to superintend this sort of physical training ; and, in the end, this important trust was confided to Sir Walter Murphy, an athletic specimen of a Yorkshire country gentleman. His mode of training the young prince admirably justified the choice, and met the views of the young duke. For several years Murphy and his charge inhabited a beautiful farm-house, a few leagues distant from the capital of Gerolstein, situated amidst fields and woods, in a most picturesque and healthy part of the country. Rudolph, freed from the trammels of etiquette, and engaged, with Murphy, in agricultural labours proportioned to his years, lived the sober, manly, and healthy life of the country, using as pleasures and recreations such violent exercises as wrestling, boxing, riding, and hunting. Amid the pure air of the fields, the woods, and the mountains, he seemed to undergo a complete transformation, and grew up vigorous as a young oak ; his somewhat unhealthy paleness gave place to the ruddy glow of health : although still slender and lathy, he triumphed over the severest fatigues : skill, activity, and courage supplying his deficiency in muscular strength, he was able, when only in his fifteenth or sixteenth year, to wrestle on more than an equality with young men much his superiors in age.

His scientific education necessarily suffered from the preference which was thus given to his physical training, and Rudolph knew but little ; but the grand duke wisely thought that, fairly to demand much from the mind, it should be supported by a strong physical organization ; then, though excited by education at a late period, the intellectual faculties promptly develop themselves.

The good Sir Walter Murphy was by no means a man of learning, and could only give Rudolph some elementary instruction ; but no one could be better qualified than he to imbue the heart of his pupil with the perception and love of all that is just, honourable, and generous, and with a horror and contempt of all that is mean, cowardly, and contemptible. These energetic affections and hatreds became permanently rooted in Rudolph. Subsequently, indeed, these principles were violently shaken by the tempests of the passions ; but never were they eradicated from his heart. The lightning blasts, breaks, and rends the tree most deeply planted ; but the living sap still nurtures its hidden roots, and a thousand fresh, green, and vigorous branches spring forth from the seemingly withered trunk.

Murphy, then, gave to Rudolph, if we may venture to use the phrase, health of body and health of soul ; he rendered him robust, active and daring, with a love of all that is good and laudable, and a hatred of all that is wicked and bad. Having thus admirably fulfilled the important trust committed to him, the worthy gentleman, called into England by urgent private affairs, was for some time absent from Germany, to the great grief of Rudolph, who loved him sincerely.

Assured of the bodily health of his son, the grand duke began to deliberate seriously on the culture of the mind of this beloved child. A certain Dr. Cæsar Polidori—a renowned philologist, a distinguished medical man, an erudite historian, and a philosopher conversant with the study of the exact and physical sciences—was entrusted with the task of culti-

vating the rich but virgin soil that had been so perfctly prepared by Murphy.

This time, the choice of the grand duke was most unfortunate; or, rather, his goodness was most cruelly abused by the person who introduced the doctor, and caused him to accept him as the preceptor of the young prince. Irreligious, knavish, hypocritical, full of art and trickery, disguising the most perilous immorality, the most impious scepticism, beneath an austere exterior; possessing a profound knowledge of human nature, but in its worst aspect alone—the disgraceful passions of humanity—Doctor Polidori was the most detestable Mentor that could have been entrusted with the mental formation of a youth.

Rudolph, abandoning with extreme regret the animated and independent life he had hitherto led with Murphy, to grow pale with book-studies, and to be fettered with the ceremonials of his father's court, at once conceived a deep aversion for his new tutor. This was but natural. On quitting his pupil, the poor Briton had well compared him to a young wild colt, full of fire and gracefulness, that is taken from its native fields, in which he sported in joyful liberty, to be subjected to bridle and spur, and be taught to regulate and apply the strength which hitherto he had only employed in galloping and bounding at will.

Rudolph, at the very outset, declared to Polidori, that he felt no relish for study, that it was above all things necessary to him to exercise his legs and arms, to inhale the pure air of the fields, to track the woods and the mountains; and that a good gun and a hunter well up to his weight, appeared to him to be far preferable to the finest books in the world.

The doctor expected this antipathy, and was secretly delighted at it; for, although pointing another way, the hopes of this man were as ambitious as those of Sarah. Although the grand duchy of Gerolstein was only a secondary state, Polidori indulged in the dream that, at some future day, he might be its Richelieu, and form young Rudolph for the part of "Prince Sluggard." But desirous, above all things, to render himself acceptable to his pupil, and, by dint of condescension and servility to cause him to forget Murphy, he concealed from the grand duke the young prince's repugnance for study; nay, went so far as to boast of and praise his assiduity and surprising progress, whilst some set questions and answers, concerted beforehand between the tutor and the pupil, but skilfully made to appear impromptu, kept the grand duke (himself by no means learned) in a state of blind confidence.

By degrees, the aversion with which the doctor had in the outset inspired Rudolph, became exchanged, on the part of the young prince, for a cavalier familiarity, very unlike the real attachment he bore to Murphy. Gradually, Rudolph (though from very innocent causes), found himself leagued with Polidori in that species of partnership which unites two accomplices. Sooner or later, Rudolph would have necessarily despised a man of the character and age of the doctor, who could basely coin falsehoods to excuse the idleness of his pupil. This Polidori knew; but he also knew, that if we do not at the very outset revolt with disgust from vicious associations, by degrees we accustom ourselves to their often seductive spirit and conversation, and thus insensibly learn to hear, without shame or indignation, railleries and sarcasms upon what we formerly held in veneration.

The doctor, however, was too consummate a tactician to shock suddenly noble convictions, which Rudolph owed to Murphy's rearing. Having sufficiently ridiculed the rude vulgarity of the pastimes of his pupil's early years, the doctor, half laying aside his mask of austerity, aroused the curiosity and heated the imagination of the young prince, by glowing and warmly-coloured tales of the gallantries which had made *illustrious* the reigns of Louis XIV., of the Regent, and especially of Louis XV., the latter being Cæsar Polidori's hero. He assured this unfortunate boy, who listened to him with fatal avidity, that pleasures, even when carried to excess, far from demoralizing a happily endowed prince, frequently have the effect of rendering him merciful and generous, inasmuch as noble souls are never better disposed towards benevolence and affection than when they are themselves happy. Louis XV. (the Well-beloved), was an irrefragable proof of this assertion. "And then," continued the doctor, "how many great men, both ancient and modern, have sacrificed largely at the altar of the most refined epicurism—from Alcibiades to Maurice of Saxony, from Mark Antony to the great Condé, from Cæsar to Vendome!" Such conversations could not fail to engrave deep gashes upon the virgin tablet of a young and ardent mind: and then the doctor eloquently translated to his pupil those odes of Horace in which that rare genius paints in the most seductive colours the soft delights of a life wholly devoted to love and to the most exquisite sensualities. In a word, to enjoy every attainable pleasure, whenever one could, was, according to this iniquitous preceptor, merely accepting and using the best gifts of the Creator. These debasing theories produced their natural fruits.

In this well-regulated and virtuous court, accustomed, from the example of its sovereign, to blameless pleasures, and innocent diversions, Rudolph, instructed by Polidori, already dreamed of the wild nights of Versailles, of the orgies of Choisy, of the fierce voluptuousness of the Parc-aux-Cerfs, and occasionally, in contrast with these, of some romantic amours. Neither did the doctor fail to express his decided opinion that the military duties of a prince of the Germanic

Confederation were sufficiently fulfilled by sending his contingent to the Diet. Moreover, the spirit of the time was not warlike. Delightfully and idly to spend his days among women, and amidst the refinements of luxury; by turns to seek repose from the intoxication of sensual pleasure amidst the delightful attractions of the arts; occasionally to hunt, not as some barbarous Nimrod, but as an intelligent epicurean, enjoying those transient fatigues which so greatly heighten the charm of repose and indolence; such, according to the doctor, was the only life to be led by a prince, who—crowning his happiness!—could find a prime minister capable of bravely devoting himself to the heavy and wearisome burthen of affairs of state.

Rudolph, while yielding himself to suppositions which were so far innocent that they were confined within the circle of inevitable contingencies, resolved, whenever it should please Providence to call away his father, the grand duke, to devote himself to the sort of life that Cæsar Polidori painted to him in such glowing and enchanting colours, and to take for his prime minister the man whose blind devotion he already fully appreciated.

We need scarcely add that the young prince kept profoundly secret the unworthy anticipations which stirred within him. Knowing that the favourite heroes of the grand duke were Gustavus Adolphus, Charles XII., and Frederick the Great (Maximilian Rudolph had the honour of belonging to the royal house of Brandenburg), Rudolph thought, justly enough, that his father, who had expressed so much admiration of these king-captains, ever booted, spurred, and harrying and battling, would look upon his son as being utterly lost, did he suppose him capable of wishing to exchange the Teutonic gravity and propriety of his court for the easy and licentious manners of the Regency.

A year—eighteen months—thus passed. At the end of this time, Murphy returned from England, and shed tears of joy as he once more embraced his pupil. After a few days, though he could not account to himself for a change which deeply grieved him, the worthy gentleman observed Rudolph to be cold and constrained in his manner towards him, and almost bitterly ironical when he reverted to his rural and sequestered life. Confident in the natural goodness of Rudolph's disposition, Murphy felt a secret misgiving that his heart had been for a moment perverted by the pernicious influence of Doctor Polidori, whom he instinctively detested, and on whom he determined to keep a strict watch. The latter personage, on his part, felt grievously embarrassed by Murphy's return, whose frankness, penetration, and sound good sense he held in awe, and he now entertained no other idea than how most effectually to ruin the English gentleman in the opinion of Rudolph. Affairs were at this crisis, when Seyton and Sarah were presented at the court of Gerolstein, and received with such extreme distinction. We have said that Rudolph, accompanied by Murphy, had been absent from the court some weeks on a journey.

During this absence, the doctor was by no means idle. It is said that there is a mysterious freemasonry among intriguers by which they recognize, understand, and observe each other, until interest decides them in favour of an alliance or of a declared hostility. Within a few days after the establishment of Sarah and her brother at the court of the grand duke, Polidori was on peculiarly intimate terms with Seyton. With an odious cynicism, the vile doctor confessed to himself that there was a natural and almost involuntary affinity between the knavish and the wicked; and it was thus, without pretending to divine the consummation to which the intrigues of Sarah and her brother tended, that he accounted for his being attracted towards them by a sympathy too lively to arise from aught but their having in common some diabolical design. Some questions that were put to him by Seyton, as to Rudolph's character and previous life—questions which to a man less on the alert than the doctor would not have indicated any peculiar design—enlightened him at once as to the views of the brother and sister: only he did not give the young Scotch lady credit for joining so much honesty of purpose to so much ambition. The arrival of this lovely girl appeared to Polidori to be a smile of Fortune. Rudolph's imagination already inflamed with amorous chimeras, Sarah might perchance prove the sweet realization of his boyish day-dreams. What an immense influence would such a woman wield over a heart subjected to the magic of a first love! To control and to cultivate this influence, and to direct it for his own advancement and the ruin of Murphy, was the professor's policy. Like a skilful man, he distinctly gave the ambitious brother and sister to understand that it was with him that they had to deal, he alone being responsible to the grand duke for the private conduct of the young prince. Sarah and her brother intuitively understood him, although they had not communicated to him a syllable of their secret designs. On the return of Rudolph and Murphy, all three, combined for one common purpose, tacitly conspired against the Briton, their most dreaded enemy.

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What must be, will be. On his return, Rudolph, daily in the society of Sarah, became desperately enamoured of her. It was not long ere she confessed that his passion was returned, although she prophesied that love must cause them the deepest misery. He could never be happy: no, the gulf that separated them was too broad! Therefore she entreated Rudolph to observe the most guarded caution, lest he should arouse the suspicions of the grand duke, who would, doubtless, be inexorable, and deprive

them o their sole consolation—the felicity of seeing each other daily. The young prince promised obedience to the lovely girl's wishes, and the most cautious concealment of his passion. The young Scotchwoman was too ambitious, too completely self-possessed to compromise herself, or betray her secret to the eyes of the court. Rudolph also felt the necessity of dissimulation, and he imitated her prudence. The amorous secret was consequently completely preserved. When the brother and sister at length perceived that Rudolph's frenzied passion had reached its height, and that his increasing infatuation, every day restrained with more and more difficulty, was on the point of bursting forth, they resolved to make their final effort. The professor's character authorized a confidence in which, moreover, there was nothing contrary to morality. Seyton made the first overtures to him upon the necessity of the marriage of Rudolph and Sarah; otherwise, he added, with perfect sincerity, he and his sister would immediately leave Gerolstein. Sarah, he proceeded to say, returned the love of the prince, but she would infinitely prefer death to dishonour, and could be his highness's wife, or—nothing.

These pretensions utterly amazed the doctor: he never suspected Sarah of such soaring ambition. A marriage beset by so many difficulties and dangers appeared totally impossible to Polidori, and he frankly explained to Seyton the reasons which would prevent the grand duke from ever consenting to such a union. Seyton as frankly admitted these reasons, allowing to them their full weight; but he proposed, as a middle course, by which all things would be reconciled, that the marriage, perfectly regular in every other respect, should be strictly secret, and remain so, until the decease of the reigning grand duke. Sarah was the daughter of an ancient and noble house; and precedents were not wanting for such a union. Seyton gave the prince a week to decide upon his proposal. His sister, he said, could no longer endure the cruel anguish of uncertainty; and if she must eventually renounce Rudolph's love, it was clearly better to pass through the agonizing ordeal of separation without delay.

Certain that Sarah's views were no longer mistakeable, the doctor was sorely perplexed. There were three courses for him to pursue—to inform the grand duke of this matrimonial conspiracy; to open the eyes of Rudolph to the manœuvring of the Seytons; or to lend his assistance in bringing about the marriage.

To inform the grand duke was for ever and utterly to forfeit the goodwill of the heir to the crown. To enlighten Rudolph upon the interested views of Sarah, was to expose himself to be treated as every one is who endeavours to depreciate the object of affection in the eyes of a lover;—then, what a terrible blow would he deal to the heart or to the vanity of the young prince, to show him that it was his sovereign position alone that she sought to espouse! On the other hand, by lending his aid to bring about this marriage, Polidori would attach Rudolph and Sarah to himself by the tie of deep gratitude; or, at least, by the complicity of a dangerous act. Doubtless, all might be discovered, and the doctor exposed to the anger of the grand duke; but the marriage would be concluded, the union would be binding, the storm would blow over, and the future sovereign of Gerolstein would be all the more closely bound to Polidori, from the latter having braved greater perils in his service. After the most mature reflection, he therefore decided on assisting Sarah; but with a certain restriction, of which we shall speak hereafter.

Rudolph's passion had now reached its crisis. Heightened by constraint, and by the skilful seductions of the Scotchwoman, who pretended to suffer even more than he from the insuperable obstacles interposed by honour and duty to their felicity—a few days more, and the young prince would have betrayed himself.

Thus, when the doctor proposed to him the alternative of either never again seeing this intoxicating beauty, or of possessing her wholly and at once, by means of a private marriage, Rudolph threw himself on Polidori's neck, calling him his saviour, his friend, his father. Had the temple and the minister been at hand, the young prince would have been instantly married. The doctor, for his own good reasons, volunteerd the necessary arrangements. He found a minister and witnesses; and the union (of which all the formalities were carefully examined and verified by Seyton) was secretly celebrated during a brief absence of the grand duke, who was summoned to a conference of the Germanic Diet. The predictions of the Highland nurse were realized—Sarah married the heir to a crown!

Without diminishing the ardour of his love, possession rendered Rudolph more circumspect, and calmed that violence which had threatened to betray the secret of his passion for Sarah. The young couple, protected and advised by Seyton and the doctor, managed so well, and practised so much reserve towards each other, that they escaped suspicion.

An event, impatiently expected by Sarah, speedily changed this calm into a tempest. She was about to become a mother! It was then that this woman made demands upon Rudolph, which were as alarming as they were unexpected. She declared to him, in a passion of hypocritical tears, that she could no longer support the constraint in which she lived, a constraint which her pregnancy rendered doubly painful. In this extremity, she resolutely proposed to the young prince to confess all to his father, who, as well as the dowager grand duchess,

showed more affection for Sarah than ever. No doubt, she added, he would, in the first instance, be outrageously indignant; yet he so tenderly, so blindly loved his son, and was so affectionately disposed towards her, that his paternal anger would by degrees subside, and she would at least take the rank to which she was entitled at the court of Gerolstein—a rank to which she might be said to have a double claim, since she was about to give birth to a child which would be the heir of the presumptive successor to the crown. Rudolph was alarmed at this pretension; he knew the deep attachment of his father, but he also knew the inflexibility of the grand duke's principles in all that concerned his princely duties; but to all his objections Sarah pitilessly replied: "I am your wife, before God and man; in a short time it will be impossible for me to conceal my situation; I will no longer blush for that of which, on the contrary, I am proud, and which I have a right only to avow."

Paternity had increased the love of Rudolph for Sarah. Torn with the desire to accede to her wishes, and the dread of his father's anger, he experienced the most bitter anguish. Seyton sided with his sister. "The marriage is indissoluble," said he to his royal brother-in-law. "The grand duke may exile you and your wife from his court, but nothing further. He loves you too much to do even that, and will prefer to tolerate that which he now cannot remedy."

These arguments, though plausible in themselves, did not suffice to calm Rudolph's anxieties. In this state of affairs, Seyton was ordered by the grand duke to visit certain of the Austrian breeding-studs. This mission, which he had no plea for declining, would, at the most, occupy him a fortnight; and he set out, with much regret, at so critical a period for his sister. Sarah was at once glad and sorry at her brother's departure. She lost the support of his counsels; but, in the event of all being discovered, he would at least be safe from the grand duke's anger. Sarah wrote to her brother daily, and kept him fully informed of the progress of the business so important to both. That their correspondence might be the more secure, they made use of cipher, which they contrived for that purpose, and to which Polidori also held the key. This precaution alone suffices to prove that Sarah had to write to her brother about something more than merely her love for Rudolph. In truth, this selfish, cold, and ambitious woman, never felt the ice of her heart melt by the ardent flame of the love she had herself enkindled. Motherhood was regarded by Sarah merely as another means of subjecting Rudolph, but shed no softening influence on her bronze soul. The youth, the delirious love, and the inexperience of the prince, still almost a boy—so cruelly betrayed into an inextricable labyrinth, scarcely interested this soulless woman. In her private communication to her brother, she bitterly and disdainfully complained of the weakness of this young man, who trembled before the most fatherly of German princes—*who all lived so very long!* In a word, this correspondence between the brother and sister clearly exhibited their interested selfishness, their ambitious designs, their almost homicidal impatience, and laid bare all the springs of a dark plot which had been consummated by the marriage of Rudolph. One of Sarah's letters to her brother was abstracted by Polidori, who was the medium of this correspondence: for what purpose will be seen hereafter.

A few days after the departure of Seyton from Gerolstein, Sarah was present at a drawing-room held by the dowager grand duchess. Many of the ladies present stared at her with astonishment, and whispered to each other. The grand duchess Judith, notwithstanding her ninety years, had good sight and a sharp ear, and this little caballing did not escape her. She motioned to one of her ladies-in-waiting to approach her, and, in reply to her inquiries, was informed that everybody fancied that Lady Macgregor looked less slender, less graceful, than usual. The old princess was passionately fond of her favourite, and so confident of Sarah's virtue, that she would have ventured to answer for it to heaven. Indignant at what she thought the malevolence of the reply, she shrugged her shoulders disdainfully, and said, in a tone to be heard by all present: "My dear Sarah, I wish to speak to you."

Sarah rose. She had to cross the circle in order to reach the seat of the grand duchess, who wished by the mere fact of her crossing the saloon, to confound her calumniators, by showing triumphantly that the figure of her *protégée* had lost none of its symmetry or its grace. Alas! the most perfidious enemy could not have devised a plan more decisive against Sarah than that which the kind-hearted princess had chosen for defending her. Sarah approached the dowager. It required all the profound respect that was inspired by the presence of the grand duchess to suppress a cry of indignation and surprise as the young lady crossed the room. The least clear-sighted could not but perceive what, in truth, Sarah had *no wish to conceal* —for her pregnancy might, with slight care, have been hidden for some time longer; but the ambitious woman had sought this exposure, for the purpose of forcing Rudolph into a declaration of their marriage. The dowager grand duchess, however, refused to credit the evidence of her own sight, whispered to her: "My dear child, how frightfully you are dressed to-day! You, whose waist one might span, are now scarcely recognizable." * * *

Hereafter we shall relate the consequences of this discovery, which brought with it important and terrible events. But we may

now say what, probably, the reader has already guessed — that Fleur-de-Marie was the fruit of the secret marriage of Rudolph and Sarah, and that both parents believed their unhappy daughter to be dead.

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It has not been forgotten that Rudolph, after having visited the house in the Rue du Temple, had returned to his own home; and that he was engaged in the evening to be present at a ball to be given by the —— ambassadress. It is to this *fête* that we shall follow his royal highness the reigning grand duke of Gerolstein, Gustavus Rudolph, travelling in France under the name of the Comte de Duren.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BALL.

AT eleven o'clock that evening a Swiss, in state livery, threw open the gates of an hotel in the Rue Plumet, to let out a magnificent blue coach, drawn by a pair of beautiful grey horses. Upon the box, which had an ample hammercloth with rich deep silk fringes, sat a portly coachman, wearing a three-cornered hat, whose rotundity was increased by an immense blue driving-coat, deeply furred with a broad collar of marten-skin, trimmed with silver lace, and the breast covered with massive silver frogs. Behind the carriage stood a tall, powdered footman, attired in a livery of blue, yellow, and silver: and beside him a chasseur with enormous moustaches, embroidered like a drum-major, with his gorgeously laced hat half concealed by a drooping plume of blue and yellow feathers.

The lamps threw a brilliant light into the interior of this carriage, which was lined with satin; and within were to be seen Rudolph seated on the right, with the Baron de Graün on his left, and opposite to him the faithful Murphy.

In deference to the sovereign represented by the ambassador, to whose ball he was now proceeding, Rudolph wore no other distinction save the diamond badge of the order of ——.

The orange riband and enamel cross of a Grand Commander of the Golden Eagle of Gerolstein were suspended from the neck of Sir Walter Murphy, and the Baron de Graün was similarly decorated; but the diplomatist wore also, suspended by a gold chain placed between the two first button-holes of his coat, crosses of all countries, too numerous to mention,

"I am highly pleased," said Rudolph, "to hear the good news that Mrs. George gives me relative to my poor little favourite at Bouqueval farm, and the skill of David has done wonders. And now that I am speaking of poor Goualeuse, what think you, Sir Walter Murphy, if any of your desirable acquaintances of the City were to see you in your present *disguise*, my valiant charcoal-man, would they not be marvellously astonished?"

"I rather think that your highness would cause no less surprise, were you to go this evening to the Rue du Temple, and pay a friendly visit to Mrs. Pipelet, for the purpose of soothing the melancholy of poor dear Alfred, victim of the infernal Cabrion!"

"My lord has so graphically described Alfred with his majestic green coat, his doctorial air, and his immovable chimney-pot hat," said the baron, "that I fancy I can see him seated in his dark and smoky lodge! May I hope that your highness is satisfied with the indications given by my secret agent, and that the visit to the house in the Rue du Temple completely met your expectations?" said the baron.

"Yes," said Rudolph, "I have discovered there more than I anticipated."

After a few moments of painful silence, caused by his fears on account of the Marchioness d'Harville, Rudolph, in a gayer tone, resumed: "I scarcely dare to confess such childishness, but there is something that delights me in these contrasts: after this morning offering a glass of bitters to Mrs. Pipelet, and taking care of her lodge, in the evening I find myself one of those privileged beings who, *by the grace of God*, reign over this lower world. The ten-pound householder speaks of '*my property*, just the same as a *millionnaire!*" added Rudolph, by way of parenthetical allusion to the limited extent of his estates.

"But many *millionnaires* do not possess the rare, the admirable good sense of the man of narrow means, said the baron."

"Oh, my dear de Graün, you are too kind—a thousand times too kind; you really overwhelm me!" said Rudolph, with an ironical smile; while the baron looked at Murphy with the air of a man who has discovered too late that he has been saying something foolish. "In truth, my dear de Graün," resumed Rudolph, "I know not how to acknowledge the good opinion you have of me, nor, above all, how to repay you in your own flattering coin."

"I beg your highness not to trouble yourself to do so," said the baron, who had for the instant forgotten that Rudolph had the utmost detestation of flattery, and never failed to punish it with the most merciless raillery.

"Nay, baron, I canot allow myself to remain in your debt. You have lauded my superior intelligence—I will in return render my admiration of your countenance. On my honour, you look like twenty! Antinöus himself could not boast of more enchanting features than yours."

"Oh, mercy!"

"Behold him, Murphy!—has Apollo more elegant, more slender, or more juvenile proportions?"

"Oh, pardon me, I beseech your highness. It is a long time since I have permitted myself to flatter."

"See, too, Murphy, that circle of gold which confines, but hides not, the locks of his fine, dark hair, that fall in such wavy profusion on his godlike neck, and——"

"Your highness! mercy, mercy! I am very, very penitent!" said the unfortunate diplomatist, with an expression of the most comical despair.

It must not be forgotten that these jokes were passed upon a man full fifty years of age, with thin, grey hair, frizzled, and powdered, a stiff white cravat, a pale, withered countenance, and a pair of gold spectacles.

"Your highness, I must entreat pardon for the baron! Pray do not overwhelm him beneath the weight of that mythology," exclaimed the squire, laughing; "I will be answerable to your highness that it will be a long time ere he will again venture upon *flattery*; since it seems that, in the Gerolstein vocabulary, such is the translation for *truth!*"

"What! and you, too, my old Murphy, at such a time, dare——"

"Your highness, I am really in pain for poor de Graün, and wish to take a portion of his punishment."

"Sir Coalman-in-Ordinary, you display a friendship which does you honour. But, seriously, my dear de Graün, how could you forget that I never endure flattery, except from von Arnheim, and such as he? For, to speak candidly, those men know not how to express themselves otherwise; it is the fluttering of their plumage: but a man of your taste, knowledge, wit, and judgment—fie, baron, fie!"

"Well," replied the baron, resolutely, "your highness must allow me to say, that there is a great deal of pride in your dislike to a just compliment!"

"Well said, baron; that style suits me better; but let me hear you explain yourself."

"Well, it is exactly like a very handsome woman saying to her admirers: 'Oh, yes, I know I am all that is delightful, but your approbation is needless, and therefore wearisome! What is the use of repeating what everybody knows? You might as well run about the streets and say, "The sun shines!"

"This is more skilful, baron, but more dangerous; and so, by way of varying your punishment, I will confess to you, that the infernal Polidori himself could not better have disguised the poison of flattery."

"Your highness, I am silenced."

"Then," said Murphy, very seriously, "you do not doubt that it was the wretch Polidori whom you encountered in the Rue du Temple?"

"I have not the least doubt of it, since you tell me that he has for some time been at Paris."

"I had forgotten, or rather, I purposely omitted to speak to you of him," said Murphy, sadly; "because I know how hateful the remembrance of that man is to your highness."

Rudolph's features again clouded; plunged in melancholy reflections, he remained silent till the carriage entered the court-yard of the embassy. All the windows of this immense mansion threw a blaze of light far into the surrounding darkness; a double row of servants, in state livery, extended fron the entrance to the ante-chambers, and thence to the waiting-rooms, where they were replaced by grooms of the chamber.

The Count and Countess * * * * had stationed themselves in the first reception-room, to await the arrival of Rudolph, who shortly entered, followed by Murphy and de Graün.

Rudolph, at this period, was in his thirty-sixth year; but though on the down-hill of life, his strikingly handsome and regular features, and the air of dignity which shone in every movement, would always have rendered him a distinguished man, even had he not possessed the advantages bestowed by the splendour of his sovereign rank. In fact, he was a prince.

Rudolph, on this occasion, was simply attired. He wore a white cravat and waistcoat; a blue coat, buttoned very high up, on the left breast of which shone a diamond star, displaying to perfection the light, yet admirable proportions of his elegant figure; while his well-fitting pantaloons of black cassimere, defined the finely-formed leg, and disclosed the handsome foot in its embroidered stocking.

The grand duke so rarely appeared among the Upper Ten, that his arrival caused a great sensation; every eye was fixed upon him, when, followed by Murphy and Baron de Graün, he entered the first saloon. An *attaché*, who had been charged to watch for his appearance, immediately announced him to the countess, who, with her noble husband, approached Rudolph, saying, "I cannot sufficiently express my sense of the honour which your highness confers on us on this occasion."

"Your ladyship is aware that I am always anxious for an opportunity of paying my respects to you, and extremely happy to embrace every occasion of offering the assurance of the high consideration in which I hold his excellency, for we are old acquaintances, Sir Count."

"Your royal highness, in condescending thus to remind me, gives me a new cause not to forget former favours."

"I assure you, count, that it is not my fault that certain reminiscences are ever present to my mind. I have the happy faculty of remembering only that which has been extremely agreeable to me."

"Your highness is, indeed, marvellously endowed," said the countess, smiling.

"Am I not, my lady? Thus, for many years, I hope to have the pleasure of reminding you of this day; and of the taste, the

exquisite elegance, which preside at this entertainment; for, to speak candidly, I may say to you in confidence, that it is you alone who have the secret of giving such entertainments."

"Your highness is too flattering!"

"I have not yet done. Pray resolve me one question. Why is it that the ladies seem handsomer beneath your roof than elsewhere?"

"Doubtless because your royal highness extends to them the kindness with which you overwhelm us," said the ambassadress.

"Permit me to differ from you, count; I rather think that effect is wholly produced by Madame the Ambassadress."

"Will your highness condescend to solve this enigma?" said the countess, with a smile.

"The explanation is very simple, madame. You have the talent of receiving your lovely guests with such perfect urbanity, and such exquisite grace; you bestow on each of them a word so delightfully flattering, that those who do not *quite* deserve your amiable praises," said Rudolph, smiling with good-tempered satire, "are the more radiant with joy at having received it; while those who *do* merit it become radiant with the joy of being appreciated by *you*. These innocent satisfactions light up every countenance; and happiness renders even the least agreeable more attractive. Hence, the ladies always look more lovely beneath your ladyship's roof than elsewhere; and I am sure my lord the Ambassador will agree with me."

"Your royal highness's argument is too flattering to allow of my resisting it."

"And I," said the countess, "at the risk of becoming as radiant as those ladies who do not *quite* merit the flattering praises bestowed upon them—accept your royal highness's complimentary explanation with as much gratitude and pleasure as if it were the true one."

"To convince your ladyship that it is sober truth, let us make some observations upon the effect of praise upon the countenance."

"Oh, your highness," replied the countess, laughing, "that would be a terrible snare."

"Well, I renounce my project, but it is on condition that your ladyship will permit me to make a tender of my arm for a few moments. I have heard of a winter-garden—a hyperborean scene of fairy-land; will you be good enough to let me view this wonder, worthy of the *Arabian Nights*?"

"With the greatest of pleasure; but, in truth, it has been much exaggerated to your royal highness, as you will perceive—unless, indeed, you suffer your usual indulgence to deceive you."

The countess accepted the offered arm, and proceeded with Rudolph to the other apartments, while the count remained behind, in conversation with the Baron de Graün and Murphy, with whom he had long been acquainted.

Nothing, indeed, could be imagined more worthy of the fairy marvels of the Arabian Nights, than the winter garden of which Rudolph had spoken.

Imagine, at the farther end of a long and splendid gallery, a ground-plot of forty feet in length, and thirty in width; a glazed roof of extreme lightness, in the form of an arch, covers the entire of this vast parallelogram at the height of about fifty feet. The walls panneled with innumerable mirrors, are latticed by the small green diamond-shaped apertures of a delicate trellis of cane-work, which, aided by the lights reflected from the mirrors, resembles an open arbour by daylight, and is almost concealed by the intervention of a thick row of orange-trees, luxuriant as those of the Tuileries, and of gigantic camelias. The former loaded with fruit which shine like golden apples on the lustrous green of the foliage, and the latter enamelled with a profusion of purple, white, and scarlet flowers. This was the border of the garden.

Five or six dense clumps of Indian and tropical shrubs, sunk in deep vessels filled with heath-soil, are surrounded by walks marbled with a beautiful mosaic of shells, and wide enough for three or four persons to walk abreast. The effect produced by this display of vigorous exotic vegetation in mid-winter, and almost in the midst of a ball-room, was indescribable. Here gigantic bananas soar to the lofty glazing of the roof, mingling their broad, bright green palms with the lanceolated leaves of tall magnolias, several of which are already covered with flowers as odorous as they are magnificent, purple without and silvered within, stamens of gold darting from their bell-shaped calyces. In the distance, the palms and date-trees of the East, the red-wood and Indian fig, all robust, flourishing, and blooming, form a back-ground to these immense marshes of tropical verdure—a verdure so abundant, so lustrous, so beaming, that, viewed by the splendour of innumerable lights, it flashed with the brilliancy of the emerald!

Among the trellis, between the orange trees, and among the clumps, an infinite variety of parasitical plants entwined and interlaced themselves; here depending in festoons of foliage and flowers, there mounting in splendid spirals, further on, tangled into an inextricable network, they ran, wreathed, trailed along the ground like floral serpents, or mounted aloft to the crown of the lofty glass-work: the winged passion-flower, and passiflora with their large flowers of purple, dotted with azure and crowned with a diadem of deepest violet, redescended from the apex of the roof in colossal garland, and seemed striving to reascend as they shot up their delicate spikes from the very summit of the lofty aloes.

In another place a bignonia, with its light foliage and long calyces of bright sulphur-colour, is encircled by a Cape jessamine bear-

ing those white and fleshy flowers which diffuse such delightful fragrance: these two climbers, thus enlaced, festoon with their green fringe and bells of gold and silver, the enormous velvet-like foliage of an Indian fig-tree. Still farther, a countless assemblage of the stems of asclepias, the leaves and clusters of which, bearing fifteen or twenty blooms, were so dense and so polished, that one might have supposed them bouquets of scarlet enamel, encircled by little leaves of green porcelain, threw themselves aloft to return in a variegated vegetable cascade. The borders of these clumps were composed of Cape heaths, Van Thol tulips, oriental daffodils, Persian hyacinths, cyclamens, and orris, which formed a sort of natural carpet, where every tint and every shade blended in a tissue of splendour.

Chinese lanterns of transparent silk, some of a pale blue, others of a delicate blush-colour, half-hidden among the foliage, threw a soft light upon the scene. A sweet, mysterious light, proceeded from the mingling of these two tints—a delicious, fantastic, gleam, which partook of the azure clearness of a fine summer's night, delicately tinted by the crimson gleams of an aurora borealis.

This immense conservatory, sunk two or three feet below the ground level, was approached by a long gallery, glittering with gold, mirrors, crystals, and lights. This dazzling glare deepened, if we may be allowed the term, the penumbra whereon the outlines of these gigantic exotics were indistinctly traced, which were perceivable through a wide and lofty opening partially narrowed by two high door-curtains of crimson velvet. One might have imagined it to be a gigantic window opening on some beauteous oriental landscape in the calm serenity of a twilight night.

Seen from the lower ground of this winter-garden, where immense divans stood beneath a canopy of leaves and flowers, the gallery offered an inverted contrast to the soft obscurity of the conservatory. It seemed, in the distance, a sort of luminous golden haze, amidst which gleamed and sparkled, like living embroidery, the dazzling and varied colours of the dresses of the ladies, and the prismatic scintillations of costly jewels.

The notes of the orchestra, subdued and mellowed by the distance, and by the low and joyous hum that proceeded from the gallery, died languidly away among the motionless foliage of the stately exotic trees. The voices of those who wandered in this garden involuntarily became hushed to gentle whispers; the air, at once light, warm, and balmy with the thousand odorous breathings of the perfumed plants, the distant and half-audible music of the orchestra soothed every sense into a sweet and languid calm. Beyond question, two enamoured and happy lovers, seated in some shady corner of this Eden, intoxicated with love, melody, and perfume, could have found no more delicious cradle for their joy to spring to life.

On reaching this enchanting spot, Rudolph could not restrain an exclamation of surprise, and said to the ambassadress:

"Truly, I could not have credited the possibility of this wondrous reality. It is not only luxuriousness joined to the most exquisite taste, but it is poetry in action: instead of writing as a poet, or painting as a painter, your ladyship creates that which they hardly dare to dream!"

"Your highness is too indulgent."

"Nay, frankly now—confess, that he who could faithfully describe this enchanting picture, with all its charming colours, contrasts, and harmonies—yonder that dazzling crowd, here this delicious retreat—confess, madame, that he, whether painter or poet, would achieve a triumph—and that by merely reproducing your realities."

"The praises bestowed by your royal highness are the more dangerous, by reason of the polished language which frames them, and hence one listens to them despite one's self with unalloyed delight. But, see, your highness, is not yonder an enchanting young woman? Your royal highness will at least concede to me that the Marchioness d'Harville must look lovely *everywhere*. Is she not charmingly graceful? And does she not even gain by contrast with the severer beauty of the lady who accompanies her?"

Countess Sarah Macgregor and Marchioness d'Harville at this moment were descending the few steps which led from the gallery to the winter-garden. The ambassadress's laudations upon the beauty of the marchioness were not exaggerated. Words cannot adequately convey an idea of the enchanting sweetness of that face, over which was spread the blooming perfection of a most delicate style of beauty—a beauty the more rare, that it proceeded less from regularity of feature, than from the inexpressible charm of a countenance which *breathed* the tenderest goodness. We emphasize that word, because goodness is rarely the peculiar expression of the face of a woman who as yet numbers but twenty summers, and who is so lovely, so witty, so sought, followed, and caressed, and who shines forth in all the glories of birth, fortune, and elevated rank, as did the Marchioness d'Harville. Hence this singular sweetness formed a contrast irresistibly interesting, when coupled with the splendours of the marchioness's elevated position. But we will endeavour yet more clearly to eliminate our ideas.

Too dignified, too eminently gifted to seek homage, the marchioness, nevertheless, seemed as affectionately grateful for that paid to her, as though she had not been worthy of it. She was not proud of it, but pleased. Indifferent to flattery, but tenderly alive to kindness, she well knew how to distinguish sympathy. Her clear, correct

mind, sometimes satirical, but never malignant, especially pursued with witty but inoffensive raillery those self-conceited, self-worshipping people, who seek to monopolize attention, and to place continually their self-admired portraits in the foreground of a group of fortunate fools, inflated into importance by the breath of pompous blockheads. "People who," as Madame d'Harville jocularly said, "seem to pass their entire lives in dancing 'gentleman forward' before an invisible mirror, upon which they smile complacently."

A character at once timid and almost proud in its reserve, inspired Lady d'Harville with a friendly interest.

These few words are absolutely necessary to a proper understanding of certain occurrences hereafter to be narrated.

The dazzling white complexion of the Marchioness d'Harville was tinged with the most delicate carnation; long ringlets of light chestnut hair fell upon her rounded shoulders, firm and clear as the finest marble. It would be difficult to paint the angelic beauty of her large, dark grey eyes, fringed with long black silken lashes. Her coral lips, with their angelic meekness, bore the same relation to her charming eyes that her touching and affable voice did to her gentle and melancholy glance. It is unnecessary to speak of her perfect figure, or the exquisite distinction of her whole person. She wore a robe of white crape, ornamented with natural camelia flowers, intermixed with the rich green leaves of the same shrub, among which half-hidden diamonds here and there shone like trembling drops of sparkling dew. A garland, similarly composed, sat gracefully on her pure white brow.

The style of beauty of Countess Sarah Macgregor heightened, by contrast, the loveliness of the Marchioness d'Harville. Although she counted thirty-five years, Sarah scarcely appeared thirty; for nothing seems more effectual in preserving physical soundness than cold self-worship: the body keeps a long time fresh in that kind of refrigerator. The high preservation of Sarah is a proof of this position: making allowance for a slight plumpness, which gave to her figure (taller, but not so slender as that of the marquise) a voluptuous grace. Sarah shone in the brilliancy of quite youthful beauty. Few could gaze steadily upon the blaze of her sparkling black eyes; her nose was aquiline; her finely formed mouth and rich ruby lips expressed haughtiness, pride, and resolution.

The Countess of Macgregor wore a robe of straw-coloured moire under a crape tunic of the same colour; a simple crown of natural leaves of *japonica*, of emerald green, encircled her head, harmonizing with the bandeaux of hair, black as jet. This severe style of headdress imparted a classical character to the imperious profile of this woman.

Many people, the dupes of their own countenance, see in its style and expression the outward sign of an irresistible vocation. One has, or fancies he has, a very warlike physiognomy, and he fights; another a rhyming one, and he poetizes; a plotting one, and he conspires; a statesman-like one, and he becomes a politician; a preaching one, and he preaches. Now Sarah by no means unwarrantably imagined hers to be a royal physiognomy; she, therefore, could not fail to welcome the half-realized predictions of the Highland crone, and persist in expecting her predestined sovereign rank.

The marchioness and Sarah had perceived Rudolph in the winter-garden as they descended thither; but the prince feigned not to see them.

"The prince is so attentive to the ambassadress," said the marchioness to Sarah, "that he has not noticed us."

"Do not fancy that, my dear Clémence," said Sarah, who was already deep in the confidence of Lady d'Harville; "on the contrary, he *did* notice us; but he is afraid of me. His sulkiness still continues."

"His obstinate avoidance of you is more than ever unintelligible to me. I have often reproached him with the strangeness of his conduct towards you, who are so old a friend. 'The Countess of Macgregor and I are mortal enemies,' he jocularly replied: 'I have made a vow that I will never speak to her, and that vow must be sacred, indeed,' he added, 'to induce me to refrain from conversing with so lovable a lady!' And so, my dear Sarah, singular as this reply appeared to me, I was obliged to be satisfied with it."*

"I assure you that the cause of this mortal quarrel, which partakes both of the serious and the comic, is extremely innocent, and I should long ago have explained to you, were not a third person concerned in the grand secret. But what is the matter with you, my dear girl? You seem thoughtful."

"'Tis nothing—nothing, I assure you! It was so warm in the gallery just now, that I feel a slight headache; let us sit down here for a minute, and I hope it will go off."

"Let us do so; see, here is a nice retired nook. Here you will be completely hidden from the search of those whom your absence will plunge into despair," added Sarah, smiling, and pronouncing the last words with marked emphasis.

The two ladies seated themselves upon a divan.

"I said *those* whom your absence will drive to despair, my dear Clémence," resumed Sarah; "do you not thank me for my discretion?"

The marchioness blushed slightly, bowed her head, and made no reply.

"How unreasonable you are!" said Sarah,

* Rudolph's love for Sarah, and the events which followed upon that love—going back seventeen or eighteen years—were unknown in the world of Paris; both Sarah and Rudolph having equally powerful motives for concealing them.

in a tone of friendly reproach: "Can you not confide in me, child?—I say *child*, because I am old enough to be your mother."

"I not confide in *you!*" said the marchioness, sadly; "have I not, on the contrary, revealed that to you which I ought never to have confessed even to myself?"

"Excellent! well, come then, let us speak of *him:* have you sworn to drive him to despair and death?"

"Oh!" cried the terrified marchioness, "what is it you say?"

"You do not know him yet, my dear child. He is a man of cool energy, to whom life is but a mere trifle. He has always been so unhappy; yet one would say that you take daily pleasure in torturing him."

"Oh, heavens! can you possibly think that?"

"It is involuntarily done; perhaps, but undoubtedly it is so. Oh! did you but know how painfully sensitive and impressible are those souls which have been crushed by long-continued suffering! It was but now that I saw large tears roll from his eyes."

"Can that be true?"

"Quite so; and this, too, in the midst of a ball, and at the risk of becoming an object of general derision, had any one but I perceived those signs of bitter grief. Be assured, he must love well and truly to suffer thus; and above all, be so careless of concealing his sufferings from the world."

"For mercy's sake, speak no more of this!" returned the marchioness in a trembling voice, "you torment me dreadfully. Alas! I am only too well acquainted with that expression of suffering, so gentle and so resigned. Alas! alas!" added Lady d'Harville, involuntarily, "it is the pity with which he has inspired me that has been my ruin."

"What exaggeration! Ruined by having coquetted with a man who carries his discretion and reserve so far as to refrain from being presented to your husband, lest he should compromise you! Is not M. Charles Robert a man full of honour, delicacy, and heart? If I defend him with so much warmth, it is because you have never met him but at my house, and that I know his respect for you is only equalled by his attachment."

"I have never doubted his noble qualities, of which you have so often assured me; for you must be aware that it is especially his misfortunes which have rendered him so interesting in my eyes."

"And well does he merit and justify that interest. How can such a handsome countenance be other than the reflection of a noble mind? With his tall and beautiful figure, he reminds me of the gallant cavaliers of the days of romance. I once saw him in the uniform of a commander of the National Guard, and none could have looked more noble. I could not help thinking that, if nobility depended upon carriage and countenance, he would be a duke and peer, instead of simply M. Charles Robert. Would he not admirably represent one of the great names of France?"

"You are aware that I attach no great importance to nobility of birth, for you sometimes reproach me with being tainted with republicanism," said the Marchioness d'Harville, smiling.

"True it is that I have always thought, with you, that M. Charles Robert needs no title to render him lovable—and then, what rare talent he possesses! what a charming voice! What an assistance he was to us in our private morning concerts! Oh, Clémence! do you remember the first time he sang with you, what a touching pathos he threw into that duet—what feeling!"

"Hold, I entreat you," said Lady d'Harville, after a long pause; "let us change the conversation."

"Why?"

"It makes me so miserable—so melancholy—what you have told me of his deep depression and unhappy looks."

"Believe me that, in his excessive grief, a man of his nature, so impassioned, is very likely to seek in death a period to——"

"Oh! no more! no more, I implore you!" exclaimed Lady d'Harville, interrupting Sarah;—"that dreadful idea has already crossed my mind." Then, after a long silence, the marchioness added: "Again I say, let us change the theme; let us talk of—of your mortal enemy, for instance," said she, with an air of assumed gaiety: "Let us speak of the prince; I had not seen him for a long time. Do you know, he is as delightful as ever, though he is almost a king! Republican as I may be, I am quite willing to confess that there are few men so agreeable as he is."

Sarah covertly fixed a look of scrutinizing and distrustful hatred upon the marchioness, and then continued in a gay tone: "Now, confess, my dear Clémence, that you are sufficiently capricious! I have known you to have alternations of singular admiration and aversion for that same prince; a few months ago—I mean about the time of his first arrival here—you were so infatuated with him that, between ourselves, I feared a moment for the safety of your heart."

"Thanks to you," replied Lady d'Harville, with a smile, "my admiration was very short-lived; for so well did you play the part of 'mortal enemy,' to the prince, such fearful revelations did you make of his profligacy and his misconduct, that I must confess aversion took the place of that infatuation which alarmed you for my heart's repose: a repose which your 'mortal enemy' had no apparent design of disturbing; for, a short time before your revelations, the prince, though he continued to be as intimate as ever with my husband, ceased almost entirely to honour me with his visits."

"Talking of your husband—is he here this evening?" asked Sarah.

"No! he preferred remaining at home," replied Lady d'Harville, with embarrassment.

"It seems to me that he goes less and less into fashionable society."

"He never had a taste for it."

The marchioness was visibly embarrassed. Sarah perceived it, and continued: "The last time that I saw him he appeared paler than usual."

"He has been somewhat unwell."

"Shall I be candid with you, my dear Clémence?"

"Oh, yes, pray——"

"How is it, when your husband is spoken of, that you appear so agitated?"

"I? what folly!"

"Sometimes in speaking of him, in spite of yourself, your countenance expresses—but, good heaven! how can I word such an idea intelligibly——?" and Sarah paused; then, laying great stress upon the following words, and looking as though she would read the inmost soul of Clémence, she said: "Yes, your whole countenance betrays a feeling of—fearful aversion!"

The impassible features of Lady d'Harville at first defied the scrutinizing gaze of Sarah, but her practised eye soon detected a slight though scarcely perceptible nervous quivering of the unhappy woman's lip. Not wishing to push her investigation further, and especially not desiring to arouse the suspicions of her *friend*, the countess hastened to add: "Yes, a timid aversion, such as is generally inspired by a jealous, peevish, ill-tempered——"

At this explanation, the slight quivering of Lady d'Harville's lip ceased; she appeared to be relieved of a heavy load, and replied: "Oh, no, my lord is neither cross nor jealous, I assure you." Then, as if seeking some pretext to turn a conversation so painful to her feelings, she suddenly exclaimed: "Ah! here comes the insupportable Duke de Lucenay, one of my husband's friends. I hope he will not see us! Whence has he sprung? I thought he was a thousand miles hence!"

"Why, in fact, he was said to have gone to the East for a year or two, and it is barely five months since he set out. This sudden arrival must singularly annoy the duchess—though the poor duke is so very inoffensive," added Sarah, with a wicked smile. "Nor will the duchess be alone in her vexation at this annoying return; M. de Saint-Remy will, doubtless, share her regrets."

"Do not be slanderous, my dear Sarah; say that this sudden re-appearance will be an annoyance to—everybody. The duke is assuredly sufficiently disagreeable to allow of the generalization of your reproach."

"I am by no means slanderous; I am merely an echo of the world's voice. It is further said, that M. de Saint-Remy, the pattern of fashionables, who has dazzled all Paris, is nearly ruined, although his vast expenses are by no means curtailed. However, there are ways of accounting for that—her Grace Lucenay is immensely rich——"

"Fie!"

"Once more, I merely repeat what others say. Oh, heavens! the duke perceives us. He is coming towards us; we must resign ourselves to fate. How dreadful! I know nothing in the world more insupportable than this man; he is often so vulgar, he laughs so loudly at his own stupidities, and is so noisy, that it is quite horrifying. If you have any regard for your smelling-bottle or your fan, guard them from him with desperation; for, to his other agreeable qualities, he adds a determined propensity to break everything that he touches, and that, too, in the pleasantest and most self-satisfied manner imaginable."

Descended from one of the first families of France, still young, and with a face which would not have been unpleasing but for the grotesque and disproportionate length of his nose, the Duke de Lucenay added to perpetual turbulence and restlessness of voice and manner, a laughter so tremendously loud and long, speeches often in such detestable taste, and attitudes so abrupt and awkward, that it was necessary every instant to recollect his name to avoid becoming astonished at seeing him amid the most distinguished company in Paris, and in order to understand how toleration could be extended to his eccentricities of language and gesture, to which, however, custom had secured a sort of licensed impunity. He was shunned as a pest, although he was by no means destitute of a sort of wit which glanced here and there through the most incredible exuberance of words. He was one of those avenging beings into whose hands one would always wish to see the ridiculous and the contemptible fall.

The Duchess de Lucenay, one of the most agreeable and most fashionable women in Paris, though full thirty years of age, had caused herself to be often spoken of; but the world almost excused the levity of her conduct, in consideration of the insupportable oddities of her husband.

Another trait in this annoying character was a pesciness and unheard-of cynicism relative to imaginary complaints and ridiculous infirmities which he diverted himself in attributing to people, and on the score of which he would loudly pity them in the immediate presence of a hundred persons. Possessed of first-rate courage, the Duke de Lucenay readily risked all consequences of his absurd jokes, and had several times "gone out," wounding or being wounded, without the slightest abatement of his absurdities.

Having stated thus much, the reader must now suppose that he hears the sharp and piercing voice of his Grace of Lucenay, who, the instant he espied Sarah and Lady d'Harville, though he was still at a distance from them, called out: "Well, well—what's all this mean? What do I see? The prettiest

woman at the ball hiding herself from everybody! I can't allow this. Was it necessary that I should return from the antipodes to put a stop to such shameful doings? In the first place, my most noble marchioness, if you persist in hiding yourself from general admiration, I will cry out like a scalded child—I will scream aloud at the disappearance of the most charming ornament of this *fête*."

By way of a finish to this address, the marquis threw himself almost on his back beside the ladies, crossed his left leg upon his right thigh, and took his foot in his hand.

"How, your grace! so soon returned from Constantinople?" said Lady d'Harville, impatiently recoiling.

"There, now! you have *said* just what my wife *thought*, I know; for she refused to accompany me this evening on my re-entering company; and I declare her absence has produced a far greater effect than my presence. That's funny, isn't it? When she's with me, nobody takes the slightest notice of me: but when I enter a room alone, a crowd comes buzzing round me, all asking together: 'Where is her grace the duchess? Is she not coming this evening? How vexatious!' and so forth; they're just like you, marchioness. Here I come back all the way from Constantinople, and you receive me just as they would a dog on a skittle-ground; yet I am as agreeable as other people."

"You could easily have remained agreeable—in the East!" said Lady d'Harville, with a half smile.

"You mean, that I might have stayed away altogether? Oh, what horror and infamy!" shouted the Duke de Lucenay, uncrossing his legs, and drumming on his hat.

"For the love of heaven, do not scream so loudly, and do keep yourself still, or you will fairly drive us away!" said Lady d'Harville, angrily.

"Drive you away? Oh! you wish to take my arm, and make a turn or two in the gallery?"

"With you?—certainly not. Come, now, pray do not touch that bouquet; and, for mercy's sake, let my fan alone too—you will only break it, according to your custom."

"Oh, as far as that goes, I am rather unlucky; I have broken one or two things: I smashed a magnificent Chinese fan which Lady de Vaudémont gave my wife." As he finished this encouraging speech, de Lucenay rolled over backwards, and entangled himself in a network of climbing plants, which he began drawing upon him by a succession of slight jerks. He at length succeeded in detaching them from the tree which supported them; they fell, and the duke might be said to be crowned with them. Pleased with his exploit, he burst into laughter so shrill, so wild, and so deafening, that Lady d'Harville would have fairly fled from this troublesome and inconvenient personage, had she not perceived M. Charles Robert (the *Commander* of Mrs. Pipelet's little history), who was approaching from the other end of the walk; the marchioness, fearing to appear to seek a meeting, resumed her seat beside the duke.

"Tell me now, Lady Macgregor, don't I marvellously resemble the god Pan, a Naïad, or some sylvan deity, or a savage, under this bunch of foliage?" said the duke to Sarah, against whom he sprung, with all his leafy honours thick upon him. "Talking of savages, I will tell you a most outrageously indecent story. Only picture to yourself, that at Otaheite——"

"Your grace!" said Sarah, in her sternest tone.

"Oh, very well, I won't tell you my story, then: it's your loss! I'll keep it for Madame de Fonbonne, whom I see coming this way."

Madame de Fonbonne was a short, fat woman, some fifty years old, very affected and very ridiculous; her chin reposed on her bosom, and she constantly exhibited the whites of her large staring eyes, while she continually talked of her soul—of the languors of her soul, the cravings of her soul, the aspirations of her soul, and so forth. To these disadvantages she added that of wearing, on the evening in question, a frightful-looking turban of copper-coloured stuff, figured with a bright green.

"Yes!" again shouted the duke, "I will keep my story for Madame de Fonbonne."

"What is that, my lord duke?" said Madame de Fonbonne, bridling up and murmuring, and "turning up the whites of her eyes," as the vulgar phrase it.

"It is, madame, a horribly incongruous, revolting, and indecent story."

"Good heavens! and who will dare to permit himself to tell it?—who will have the audacity to——"

"I, madame, I! It's a tale I know that would make an old demirep blush; but I believe you are fond of such stories, and I will relate this to you. Now, just listen."

"It is inconceivable that your grace should permit yourself to——"

"Well, well, since you are so disagreeable, I won't tell you another word of my story, although I reserved it on purpose for you; but, looking at you—*you*, so celebrated for the tasteful elegance of your dress, allow me to add, that the horrid turban which you wear this evening looks like an old copper stewpan mouldy with verdigris!" So saying, the duke again burst into a peal of laughter.

"If you have merely returned from the East for the purpose of resuming your sorry jests, which are only tolerated on account of your being half mad," said the irritated fat lady, "your return thither won't be much regretted, sir," with which, Madame de Fonbonne waddled majestically away.

"I tell you what, Lady Macgregor, if you don't take care of me, I shall be after that old woman, and crush her stewpan," said the duke. "But, no, I will have mercy on her,

poor thing—she's an orphan!—ha! ha! ha!" Renewed laughter announced that the duke was himself again. "Hallo! here comes M. Charles Robert," cried the Duke de Lucenay; "I met him at the Pyrenees watering-places last summer—deuced smart fellow—sings like a goo—swan, I mean. Now, marchioness, I'll show you some sport. Would you like to be introduced to him?"

"Pray be quiet, and don't interfere with us, I beg," said Sarah, turning her back most unceremoniously upon the speaker.

While M. Charles Robert had been slowly advancing, affecting to be engaged in admiring the flowers, the Duke de Lucenay had adroitly contrived to possess himself of Sarah's smelling-bottle, and he was now silently and carefully busied in depriving it of its gold top.

M. Charles Robert slowly advanced; his tall figure was finely proportioned, his features of unimpeachable regularity, his attire extremely tasteful; nevertheless, his countenance, his whole person, were wanting in charm, in grace, in distinction: his gait was stiff and embarrassed, and his hands and feet large and vulgar. When he perceived Lady d'Harville, his insipid and unintellectual countenance assumed an expression of deep melancholy, far too sudden to be genuine; nevertheless, the acting was perfect in its way. M. Robert had the air of being so frightfully unhappy, so naturally despairing, as he drew near to Lady d'Harville, that she could not refrain from thinking of the dreadful words in which Sarah had hinted at the extremity to which despair might drive him.

"Oh! good evening, my dear sir," said the Duke de Lucenay, intercepting the Commander. "I have not had the pleasure of seeing you since we met at the springs. What's the matter with you? What a used-up devil you look!"

M. Robert cast a long and melancholy look at Lady d'Harville, and replied to the duke, in plaintive accents: "Indeed, my lord, I am in a state of great suffering."

"God bless me! whatever is the matter with you? Are you still troubled with that wretched bark?" asked the duke, with an air of the most serious interest.

At this impertinent question, M. Charles Robert remained for a moment stupified; then a blush of anger rose to his very forehead, and he said to the Duke de Lucenay, in a sharp, firm voice: "Since your grace takes so much interest in my health, I trust that you will not fail to call and inquire for me to-morrow morning."

"What! how, my dear sir!—oh! certainly, I will *send*," said the duke, haughtily. M. Charles Robert made a half-bow, and walked away.

"Isn't that a famous joke!" he has no more cough than the Grand Turk," said the Duke de Lucenay, again throwing himself by the side of Sarah; "at least, as far as I know. Anyhow, coughs are easy catching. What say you, Lady Macgregor, does it seem to you that the tall boy is troubled with phlegm?" Sarah replied by abruptly leaving her seat without replying.

All this passed very quickly. Sarah had with difficulty resisted her inclination to laugh outright at the absurd question put by the Duke de Lucenay to the Commander; but Lady d'Harville painfully sympathized with the feelings of a man thus ridiculously questioned in the presence of the woman he loved: then, alarmed at the idea that a duel would probably take place, and urged by an irresistible feeling of pity, Clémence rose suddenly, passed her arm within that of Sarah's, overtook M. Charles Robert, who could scarcely restrain his rage, and whispered, as she passed close to him: "To-morrow, at one o'clock, *I will be there.*" Then quickly re-entering the gallery with the countess, she quitted the ball.

Rudolph, in going to this party, in addition to a duty of politeness imposed on him by his position in society, wished to take the opportunity of endeavouring to discover if his fears and suspicions as regarded Lady d'Harville were well founded, and whether she really was the heroine of Mrs. Pipelet's story. After leaving the winter-garden with the Countess——, Rudolph had vainly traversed the various rooms in the hope of meeting with Lady d'Harville unattended. He was returning to the conservatory, when, having stopped for an instant at the top of the steps, he witnessed the rapid scene that passed between Lady d'Harville and M. Charles Robert, after the abominably foolish joke of the Duke de Lucenay. Rudolph, surprised at the very significant glances that passed between Clémence and the *Commander*, felt a secret assurance that the tall and handsome young man was the mysterious lodger of the Rue du Temple. Anxious for further confirmation, Rudolph returned to the gallery.

A waltz was about to commence. At the end of a few minutes he saw M. Charles Robert standing in a doorway, evidently very much pleased with himself—enjoying perhaps the recollection of his retort to the Duke de Lucenay (for M. Charles Robert, spite of his egregious follies, was not destitute of courage), or revelling in the triumph of having thus obtained a voluntary assignation with Lady d'Harville for the morrow, who he felt assured would not disappoint him this time.

Rudolph went in search of Murphy.

"You see the fair young man in the centre of the group yonder?"

"That tall gentleman, who looks so well pleased with himself? Yes, my lord, I see him."

"Endeavour to get near enough to whisper, without his seeing you, and in such a manner that he alone may hear you, these words: '*You are very late, my angel!*'"

The squire looked at Rudolph, astounded.

"Is your highness serious in wishing me to do this?"

"I am, my dear Murphy; and if, on hearing those words, he should hastily turn round, assume that incomparable air of coolness which I have so often admired, so as to prevent the possibility of his fixing upon you as the person who spoke."

"I obey, your highness, though I am wholly at a loss to comprehend your reasons for wishing me to do this."

Before the waltz was concluded, the worthy Murphy had succeeded in stationing himself immediately behind M. Charles Robert, while Rudolph, posted so as to lose none of the effect of this experiment, attentively followed Murphy with his eyes. In a few moments M. Charles Robert turned suddenly round, with a stare of astonishment. The imperturbable Briton moved not a muscle of his countenance; and certainly that tall, bald-headed man, with so grave and imposing an aspect, was the last person whom the Commander could have suspected of having uttered those words, which reminded him of the disagreeable mistake of which Mrs. Pipelet had been at once the cause and the heroine. The waltz finished, Murphy again sought Rudolph.

"Well, my lord, that young man turned sharply, as though I had bitten him. Is there any spell in those words?"

"They are so far magical, my old Murphy, that they have discovered to me what I was most anxious to know."

Rudolph could now only pity Lady d'Harville for an error, which was all the more dangerous if, as he had a vague presentiment, Sarah was an accomplice or a confidant in the matter. With this discovery came the additional pain of believing that here lay the origin of the secret grief of the Marquis d'Harville, whom he most tenderly loved; jealousy was the cause. His wife, endowed with such excellent gifts, had sacrificed herself to a man unworthy of her. Master of a secret which he had learned by accident, incapable of abusing it, equally incapable of doing aught towards warning Lady d'Harville—who, moreover, had yielded to the blind promptings of passion—Rudolph saw himself condemned to be a quiet spectator of the ruin of this young and lovely woman, whom, in spite of himself, he still loved. He was roused from these reflections by de Graün.

"If," said the baron, "your highness will favour me with a short interview in the little hall at the other end of this, which is totally unoccupied, I will do myself the honour to relate to you the result of the inquiries you instructed me to pursue."

Rudolph followed the baron.

"The only duchess to whose name the initials N. and L. can possibly relate, is the Duchess de Lucenay, whose maiden name was Noirmont;" began the baron. "She is not here this evening, but I have seen her husband, who set out about five months since on a tour in the East, which it was understood was to occupy a year, but who suddenly returned within the last two or three days."

It will be remembered that Rudolph, during his visit to the house in the Rue du Temple, had found on the staircase leading to the apartment of the charlatan, Cæsar Bradamanti, a handkerchief saturated with tears, richly bordered with lace, and having in the corners the letters N. and L., surmounted by a ducal coronet. According to his orders, though in ignorance of these particulars, M. de Graün had inquired the names of all the duchesses then at Paris, and had obtained the information which we have just detailed. Rudolph at once comprehended how matters stood. He had no especial reason to interest himself about her grace of Lucenay; but he could not help shuddering as he reflected that, if it really was she who had visited the charlatan, that wretch—who was no other than Polidori—being in possession of the name of this woman, as he had caused her to be followed by Hoppy, was fully capable of abusing the terrible secret which placed the duchess in his power.

"Chance is sometimes very singular, your highness, is it not?" resumed M. de Graün.

"It is; but why remark it now?"

"At the moment when M. de Grangeneuve was giving me the information about the Lucenays, and was maliciously remarking how much the unexpected return of his grace must have annoyed his duchess and one of the most elegant and fashionable bloods in Paris, the Viscount de Saint-Remy, his excellency the ambassador asked me if I thought that your highness would permit him to present the viscount, who is here; he has just received the appointment of *attaché* to the Gerolstein legation, and would be only too happy to seize this opportunity of paying his respects to your royal highness."

Rudolph gave a start of impatience, then said: "It is very disagreeable, but I do not know how I can refuse; let the count know that I am ready to receive M. de Saint-Remy."

Notwithstanding his vexation, Rudolph was too perfect in kingcraft to show any want of affability on such an occasion; moreover, common report gave M. de Saint-Remy as a favoured lover to the Duchess de Lucenay, and this circumstance was sufficient to excite Rudolph's curiosity. The Viscount de Saint-Remy now approached, conducted by the Count of ——.

Saint-Remy was a handsome young man, twenty-five years of age; slender, graceful, of a most distinguished appearance, and with a prepossessing countenance: his complexion was very dark, but of that velvety, transparent, and amber-coloured hue, so remarkable in portraits by Murillo; his raven black hair, parted above the left temple, was smooth upon the forehead, yet curled gracefully around his face, and scarcely allowed the lobe

of his small white ear to be seen; the deep black of the pupils was brilliantly set in the balls of his eyes, which, instead of being white, had that slightly azure shade which gives so charming an expression to the glance of East Indians. By a caprice of nature, the thick silky moustache which graced his lip contrasted strikingly with the downy beardlessness of his chin and cheeks, which were smooth as those of a young girl; and he wore a coquettishly low cravat of black satin, which displayed a throat beauteous as that of an antique statue. A single pearl confined the long ends of his cravat—a pearl of inestimable value from its size, beauty of form, and oriental brilliancy—so vivid, that an opal could not have rivalled its iridescent changes. The exquisite style of M. de Saint-Remy harmonized admirably with the magnificent simplicity of this gem. Once seen, it was impossible to forget the face and figure of M. de Saint-Remy, so much did it differ from the ordinary style of dandies.

His luxuriousness in carriages and horses was extreme. He played high and showily; while the annual amount of his betting-book reached to two or three "thous." His house in the Rue de Chaillot was spoken of as a model of elegant sumptuousness; there he gave the most splendid dinners, after which the play ran high, and the hospitable host frequently lost considerable sums with the most perfect indifference, though it was well known that he had long ago dissipated his patrimony. All the viscount's property was derived from his mother; while his father lived in comparative poverty and seclusion in Anjou.

By way of accounting for these incomprehensible prodigalities of Saint-Remy, the envious and malignant spoke, as Sarah had done, of the great wealth of the Duchess de Lucenay; but they forgot that, even setting aside the vileness of the supposition hinted at, de Lucenay naturally had a control over the fortune of his wife, and that M. de Saint-Remy tossed away at least eight thousand pounds per annum. Others spoke of usurers —*imprudent*, because Saint-Remy had no further inheritance to expect. Others, again, spoke of him as finding "*luck ready-made*" in his turf transactions, and whispered about trainers and jockeys being bribed to make certain horses *safe*, against which he had betted heavily; but the greater number of his acquaintance never gave themselves the slightest concern about the means to which Saint-Remy had recourse for maintaining himself in style.

By birth he belonged to the best and highest society; he was gay, brave, witty, and an excellent companion; he gave famous bachelors' dinners, and after dinner would cover every stake at play his guests chose to offer. What need he do more? The women adored him, and he could boast unvaried success in all his love affairs: he was young and handsome, gallant and magnificent on all occasions where a man could be so with women of good society; in fact, the infatuation was such, that even the very cloud which veiled the source of the Pactolus from which he derived his golden supplies, threw a certain charm of mystery around his life. It was said by some, with an incredulous sneer:—"In fact, this devil of a Saint-Remy must have discovered the philosopher's stone!" When it was reported that he was attached to the French legation at the court of the grand duke of Gerolstein, there were some who deemed that the viscount wished to make an *honourable retreat*. Such was the Viscount de Saint-Remy.

The ambassador, as he presented him to Rudolph, said: "I have the honour to present to your royal highness my Lord the Viscount de Saint-Remy, attached to the legation of Gerolstein."

The viscount bowed low, and said, "Will your royal highness deign to forgive my impatience to pay my respects? I have perhaps been too hasty to enjoy an honour to which I attach so high a value."

"I shall be happy, sir, to welcome you to Gerolstein. Do you purpose setting forth soon?"

"The stay of your royal highness at Paris renders me less anxious to set out."

"The peaceful contrast of our German courts will much surprise you, accustomed as you are to the gaieties of Parisian life."

"I venture to assure your royal highness, that the kindness you now condescend to show me, and the continuance of which I make bold to hope for, will alone suffice to prevent me from regretting Paris."

"As far as depends upon me, sir, you shall have no cause to alter your opinion during your stay at Gerolstein."

Rudolph, by a slight inclination of the head, announced that the presentation was over. The viscount bowed and retired. The prince, a practised physiognomist, was subject to antipathies and sympathies which were almost always justified in the sequel. From the few words he had exchanged with M. de Saint-Remy, Rudolph felt an unaccountable aversion to that specious young man. He detected something treacherously mean in his look, and his face *dangerous*.

We shall hereafter meet M. de Saint-Remy under circumstances contrasting pitiably with his brilliant position when presented to Rudolph; a judgment may then be better formed of the value of the prince's presentiments.

This presentation over, Rudolph, reflecting on the strange encounters that chance had brought about, returned to the winter-garden. The time for supper had arrived, and the saloons were nearly deserted. The most private spot in the conservatory was at the foot of one of the clumps of trees, at the angle of a wall, which an enormous banana, thickly covered with climbing plants, almost entirely concealed: not far from this leafy tree was a

small side-door, masked by the uniform trellis-work, and leading to the banquetting-room by a long corridor: this door had been left ajar.

Hidden beneath this verdant screen, Rudolph seated himself, and became lost in a deep reverie, when his name, spoken by a well-known voice, caused him to start. Sarah, seated on the opposite side of the thicket which concealed Rudolph, was conversing in English with her brother Thomas. The prince listened attentively to the following dialogue:—

"The marchioness is gone for a few minutes to the ball of Baron de Nerval," said Sarah; "fortunately she was obliged to retire without having any opportunity of speaking to Rudolph, who was in search of her; for I fear the influence he might exercise over her, unknown to himself — an influence I have already had so much trouble even partially to combat. At length this rival, this marchioness, whom I have always dreaded with a boding presentiment, and who, by and by, might so much embarrass my plans, to-morrow will be lost for ever. Listen to me, brother, for this is important."

"You are mistaken; Rudolph never has loved the marchioness."

"It is time that I should enlighten you on that subject; many things have happened during your last absence; and as the blow must be struck sooner than I anticipated—this very night, as soon as we leave here—this conversation is indispensable. Happily, we are quite alone."

"I am all attention."

"Until she saw Rudolph, Clémence d'Harville, I am convinced, had never loved. I know not the cause, but it is certain that she feels an unconquerable aversion for her husband, who adores her; it is a mystery which I have vainly endeavoured to penetrate. The sight of Rudolph excited in her heart a thousand new and delightful emotions. I stifled this growing attachment by certain disclosures, or rather crushing calumnies against the prince. But the first yearnings of love were awakened in the young marchioness, and her heart required some object to fill the void. Having met M. Charles Robert at my house, she was struck with his beauty, just as one might be struck at sight of a splendid picture. Unfortunately, this man is as silly as he is handsome; yet there is something very touching in his glance. I praised extravagantly the loftiness of his soul, the nobility of his character. I knew the sympathizing goodness of Lady d'Harville's nature, so I painted him as oppressed by the most interesting sufferings; I directed him to look always most miserably and pitiably despairing, to make his advances by sighs, and, above all, not to utter a single word not absolutely indispensable. He has followed my advice. Thanks to his talent as a singer, to his countenance, and especially to his incurable melancholy, he has attracted the pity of Lady d'Harville, and diverted to him that yearning for an object of affection which Rudolph first awakened. Do you now understand me?"

"Perfectly—go on."

"Robert and Lady d'Harville have seen each other upon terms of intimacy only at my house, where I devote two mornings in the week to music—my dismal automaton has already whispered some impassioned words, and slipped a few tender billets into the fair hand of the marchioness. I have more terror of his writing than even of his words, but a woman is always indulgent towards the first declarations of love, and those of my pupil, from the brevity which I recommended, did him no harm. The grand point was to obtain an interview for him, which was no easy matter, for this little marchioness had more principle than love; or rather, she had not enough love to cause her to sacrifice her principles. Unknown to herself, she preserved in the depths of her heart the image of Rudolph, which, so to speak, watched over her and opposed her weak fancy for M. Charles Robert—a fancy, be it said, far more fictitious than real, but chiefly kept up by my incessant and exaggerated laudation of that brainless Apollo, whom I continually represented as crushed beneath an imaginary load of woe. At length Clémence, vanquished by the deeply despairing air of her unhappy adorer, decided, one day, upon granting him the long-desired rendezvous."

"Did she, then, make you her confidant?"

"She confessed to me her attachment for M. Charles Robert, nothing more. I took no pains to learn more; it would have annoyed her. But he, delighted, intoxicated with happiness, or rather with vanity, told me of his success, but without intrusting to me the secret of either the day or the place of meeting."

"Then how did you discover that?"

"Karl, by my orders, went next morning, and placed himself that day and the following one, at an early hour, in sight of M. Robert's door, and watched him. On the second day, towards noon, our lover took a hackney-coach, which set him down at a shabby house in the Rue du Temple. At this house he remained for about an hour and a half, and then departed. Karl waited a long time to see if any one followed M. Charles Robert out of the house, but no one came—the marchioness had broken her promise. This I learned on the following day from her lover, who was as much mortified as disappointed. I advised him to exhibit increased wretchedness and despair. The pity of Clémence was once more excited, a new assignation was extorted from her—but vainly as the former. A third time she appointed to meet him, and actually went as far as the door; this was an advance. You may see by this how this woman struggles. And why? Because I am sure

(and that is the cause of my deep hatred to her), that her heart is still occupied with the thought of Rudolph, and that thought protects and defends her. At last, this very evening, the marchioness has made an appointment with M. Robert for to-morrow; and this time I have no doubt that she will go. The Duke de Lucenay has so grossly ridiculed the young man, that the marchioness, overwhelmed by the humiliation of her admirer, has granted to pity what otherwise she would have continued to deny. This time, I repeat, she will keep her promise."

"What, then, are your plans?"

"M. Charles Robert is so little capable of appreciating the delicacy of the sentiment which this evening dictated the determination of the marchioness, that, to-morrow, he will so positively insist upon profiting by the appointment, that he will completely ruin himself with Clémence, who has resigned herself to this compromising step without passion, and solely from pity. I know her well; she will go to the place of meeting, from a courageous idea of kindness, but perfectly calm, and with a firm resolve not for an instant to forget her duties. M. Charles Robert is too vulgar to understand this, and will take every advantage of the favour thus conceded; the marchioness will take an aversion to him, and, the illusion once destroyed, she will again fall under the influence of her first love for Rudolph, which, I am convinced, lies buried in the depths of her heart."

"Well?"

"Well, I wish her to be for ever lost to Rudolph. I for my part have no doubt that, sooner or later, he would betray his friendship for Lord d'Harville, by responding to the passion of Clémence; but he will hold her in utter detestation, and will not permit himself to see her more, if he believes her guilty of a crime in which he is not the participator; that, in the eyes of a man, is ever unpardonable."

"I understand. You would inform the husband of what is going on, that, from the disgraceful exposure which must ensue, the prince may be convinced of the marchioness's criminality."

"Yes; and this will be the more easily accomplished, as I have learned from Clémence, that the marquis has suspicions already, without being able to fix them on any particular person. It is now midnight; we will shortly quit the ball; you will alight from the carriage at the first *café* we pass, and write to inform Lord d'Harville that his wife has an assignation for one o'clock to-morrow, at No. 17, Rue du Temple. He is jealous—he will surprise Clémence—the consequences must be left to themselves."

"It is an abominable action," said Seyton, coldly.

"You are over scrupulous, brother. If my modes of action are odious—so be it; I break down every barrier between myself and my wishes—granted. But have I been scrupulously dealt with?"

"Certainly not; and it is therefore I am your confederate. Just now, I will do whatever you wish; but, I repeat, it is an abominable action."

"You consent, nevertheless?"

"I must do so. This night, Lord d'Harville will learn all. And then—but I fancy I hear some one behind this clump of trees," said Seyton, suddenly interrupting himself, and speaking to Sarah in a lower voice. "I thought I heard some one move."

"Look, then," said Sarah, anxiously.

Seyton rose, and went completely round the clump of trees, but discovered no one. Rudolph had just retreated by the little side-door of which we spoke.

"I was mistaken," said Seyton, returning, "there was no one there."

"I thought not."

"Hear me, Sarah—I do not think the marchioness so dangerous to your future projects as you suppose. The prince has certain principles which nothing can induce him to break through. The young girl whom he, disguised as a working-man, conducted about six weeks ago to the farm; whom he watches over with such care; to whom he is giving an exemplary education, and whom he has several times been to visit, seems to me to be an object of far greater apprehension. We know not who or what she is, though she probably belongs to an obscure class of society; but the rare beauty with which she is endowed, the disguise which the prince adopted in order to take her to the village, and the increasing interest he evinces for her, all prove that his attachment is not a slight one. I have, therefore, anticipated your wishes with respect to her. To remove from your path this, as I think, far greater obstacle, it was necessary to act with extreme caution; to obtain the best possible information about the farm-people, the house, and the habits of the girl herself. This information I have procured, and the moment for action has arrived. Chance has thrown into my way that horrible one-eyed old wretch who had kept my address. By her connection with men of the stamp of the robber, by whom we were attacked on the night of our trip into the City, she may be of immense service. Everything is arranged; and there can be no proof against us. Besides, if, as appears to be the case, this creature belongs to the working-classes, she will not hesitate between our offers and the most brilliant condition that she can possibly dream of, for the prince has preserved an impenetrable incognito. But to-morrow this question will be solved, if not—we shall see."

"These two obstacles removed, Tom, then for our grand project!"

"It presents difficulties; but may yet succeed."

"And will it not be doubly fortunate if we

can make our grand effort at the moment when Rudolph will be doubly overwhelmed by the scandal of Lady d'Harville's conduct and by the disappearance of that creature in whom he takes such a deep interest? Would not that be the juncture at which to persuade him to believe that the daughter he continually deplores still lives! and then——"

"Silence, sister!" said Seyton, interrupting Sarah; the company are retiring from the supper-room. Since you think it will be useful to warn the Marquis d'Harville of to-morrow's rendezvous, let us go; it is late."

"The late hour at which this information will reach the marquis will be a strong proof of its importance." Thus saying, Sarah and her brother quitted the hall of the Ambassadress of ——.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ASSIGNATION.

RESOLVED, come what might, to warn Lady d'Harville of the danger that threatened her, Rudolph had quitted the winter-garden without waiting to hear the conclusion of the conversation between Sarah and her brother; he was, consequently, ignorant of the plot formed against Fleur-de-Marie, and the imminent peril which threatened the poor girl. Despite his determination, Rudolph unfortunately could not meet with Lady d'Harville, as he had hoped. On leaving the ambassador's, she had intended to pay a short visit of ceremony to Madame Nerval, but, overcome by her cruel agitation, Lady d'Harville was obliged to abandon her intention of appearing at a second *fête*, and drove directly home.

This unfortunate resolve ruined all. The Baron de Graün, as well as most of the company present at the ambassadress's ball, had been invited to that of Madame de Nerval; and Rudolph, taking the baron with him, drove rapidly thither, desiring the latter to seek out Lady d'Harville, and to inform her that the prince wished to speak to her that very night on business of the utmost importance; and that he would wait at the gates of her house, and speak to her at the carriage door, while her servants were preparing for her admission.

After much time spent in vainly seeking the marchioness, the baron returned with the intelligence of his want of success. Rudolph was in despair; he had wisely decided that it was above all things indispensable to forewarn the marchioness of the treachery of which she was to be the victim; for in that case the denunciation of Sarah, which he could not prevent, would pass for a base calumny. It was too late; the infamous letter dictated by the Countess Macgregor was delivered to the Marquis d'Harville before one o'clock on that fatal night!

* * * * *

It was morning: the Marquis d'Harville continued to pace slowly up and down his bedchamber, which was furnished with elegant simplicity; its chief ornaments consisting of a trophy of valuable modern arms, and a well-assorted case of books. The bed had evidently not been lain on, yet the silken counterpane was torn to fragments. A chair and a small ebony table with claw feet were overthrown near the hearth; the carpet was strewn with the fragments of a crystal goblet, half-crushed wax-lights, and a branched candlestick, which had rolled to the other side of the room. The apartment appeared as if it had been the scene of a violent struggle.

Lord d'Harville was about thirty years of age; his countenance was marked, masculine, and usually of a mild and prepossessing expression; but it was now contracted, pale, and haggard. He still wore his evening dress; his throat was bare, his waistcoat open; his shirt was torn, and spotted here and there with blood. His brown hair, which usually hung in curls, fell cold and lank upon his livid brow. After having for some time walked up and down the room, with folded arms, drooping head, and fixed and bloodshot eyes, he suddenly stopped before the hearth, which was fireless, though the frost had been severe during the night. Reaching from the chimney-piece the letter which he had received, he re-opened it, and with a devouring attention, re-read by the pale and wan light of that winter morning: "To-morrow, at one o'clock, your wife will go to Number 17, Rue du Temple to meet her lover. Follow her, and you will know all. Happiest of husbands!"

Whilst reading these lines, already perused so often, the blue, cold lips of the Marquis d'Harville appeared convulsively to spell, letter by letter, each word of this fatal missive.

At this moment the door opened, and a valet entered the room. This servant, already old and grey-headed, had a kindly and honest countenance. The marquis hastily turned his head, without otherwise changing his posture, still holding the letter in his hands.

"What do you want?" said he, harshly.

Instead of replying, the servant gazed with a sort of painful bewilderment at the disorder of the room; then, looking attentively at his master, he exclaimed: "Blood on your shirt! Good heaven! you are hurt, my lord! And alone too! Why did you not, as usual, ring for me, my lord, when you felt these——"

"Begone!"

"Pardon me, my lord, you must not think of it; your fire is out—the cold is intense—and especially after your—your——"

"Be silent! Leave me, I say!"

"But, my lord," replied the faithful valet, trembling as he spoke, "you appointed that M. Doublet should be here at half-past ten

o'clock this morning; he is now below with the notary."

"True!" said the marquis bitterly, assuming a forced calmness. "When a man is rich, he must look after his affairs. Truly, fortune is a great blessing!" Then he added: "Show M. Doublet into my study."

"He is there, my lord."

"Give me my clothes—quick! I want to go out——"

"But my lord——"

"Do as I tell you, Joseph," said Lord d'Harville, in a milder tone. "Is my lady stirring yet?"

"I believe her ladyship has not yet rang, my lord."

"Let me be informed when she does ring."

"Yes, my lord."

"Tell Philip to come and assist you, or you will never have done!"

"But pray, my lord, first allow me to put things a little in order here," said Joseph, sadly; "because all this would be perceived in an instant, and might lead to conjectures as to what has occurred this night."

"And if they knew it—it would be frightful, would it not?" said the marquis, in a tone of bitter raillery.

"Oh, my lord," cried Joseph, "God be praised, no one has yet the least suspicion——"

"No one! oh, no—no one suspects it!" replied the marquis, gloomily.

While Joseph busied himself in re-arranging the room, the marquis went up to the trophy formed of weapons already mentioned; examined them attentively for several minutes, nodded with ominous satisfaction, and turning to Joseph, said, "I fear you have omitted to clean the guns upstairs—I mean the fowling-pieces?"

"Your lordship gave me no orders about them," said the astonished servant.

"I did, sir, but you have forgotten it."

"I humbly protest to your lordship——"

"A pretty condition they must be in, indeed!"

"It is barely a month, my lord, since they were sent home from the gunsmith."

"No matter; as soon as I am dressed, go fetch them; I may, perhaps, go out shooting to-morrow, or next day; so I must examine my guns."

"I will do so at once, my lord."

The room being put in order, a second valet entered to assist Joseph. The marquis having finished his toilette, proceeded to his study where M. Doublet, his steward, and a notary's clerk, awaited him.

"The clerk has brought the deed, that my lord marquis may hear it read over," said the steward; "after which, nothing more than your lordship's signature is required."

"Have you perused it, M. Doublet?"

"Yes, my lord."

"That is enough; I will sign it at once."

The deed was duly signed, and the notary's clerk took his departure.

"With this acquisition, my lord," said M. Doublet, triumphantly, "your rental from good and fertile manorial property is not less than a hundred and twenty-six thousand francs sterling! Are you aware, my lord, that it is rare to have a hundred and twenty-six thousand francs in land?"

"Oh! I am a happy man—eh, M. Doublet? A hundred and twenty-six thousand francs in land! What felicity can be equal to that?"

"Without reckoning my lord marquis's funded property, which is over two millions, or taking into account——"

"Oh! exactly; without counting several other small matters of felicity to which I may lay claim."

"Heaven be praised, my lord, in truth you want nothing; youth, wealth, health, in a word, all blessings united; and, among them, or rather at the head of them," said Doublet, smiling pleasantly, "I will venture to mention, that of being the husband of madam the marchioness, and the parent of a lovely little daughter, who resembles a cherub."

D'Harville cast a gloomy look upon the steward. We will not attempt to describe the expression of cruel irony with which he said, tapping M. Doublet familiarly on the shoulder, "With a hundred and twenty-six thousand francs rental, such a wife as mine, and a daughter like a cherub, there is nothing left to be desired—is that what you would say?"

"Nay, my lord," replied the steward, simply; "there still remains to wish for the blessings of long life, that you may see your daughter married, and be a grandfather. That you may be a grandfather is my heartfelt wish, as it is that of my lady the marchioness to be grandmother, and great grandmother!"

"Oh! good, M. Doublet. You are dreaming of Baucis and Philemon. Certainly, it is remarkably appropriate."

"My lord, you are too kind! Have you any further orders for me?"

"None. Oh, stay—yes. How much ready money have you in hand?"

"Nineteen thousand three hundred odd francs for current expenses, my lord—without reckoning the cash at the bank."

"Bring me twenty thousand francs in gold; and leave them with Joseph if I go out."

"This morning?"

"Yes, this morning."

"The money shall be here within an hour. Has your lordship anything further to say to me?"

"No, M. Doublet."

"A hundred and twenty-six thousand francs in landed rental;" repeated the steward, as he quitted the room: "this is a fortunate day for me: I was much afraid that this property, so advantageous for us, would have escaped us after all. Your servant, my lord marquis."

"Good morning, M. Doublet," replied the marquis. Scarcely had the door closed upon the steward, when Lord d'Harville sank down in his arm-chair overwhelmed by misery: resting his elbows on the bureau, and covering his face with his hands, he wept. They were the first tears that he had shed since he received the fatal letter from Sarah.

"Oh!" cried he, "oh, bitter mockery of fate, to make me rich! What now can be put within my golden casket? My shame—the infamy of Clémence!—the disgrace which will be reflected from this dreadful exposure on the fair forehead of my innocent daughter! Exposure! ought I then to resolve upon it, or, for the sake of——ought I to have pity on——" Then suddenly rising, his eyes flashing, and his teeth clenched, he cried in a harsh voice: "No, no!—blood, blood! The awful preventive of ridicule! Now—yes, *now* I understand her coldness, her aversion to me—wretched, wretched woman!" Then, stopping suddenly, as if struck by some tender recollection, he said: "Her aversion Oh! I too well know the cause of that—I fill her with horror and alarm!" After a long pause he slowly went on: "Yet, is that *my* fault? Should she wrong me on that account? Instead of hatred, do I not rather merit pity?" Then, with increasing excitement, he added: "No, no! blood, blood! nothing but blood—the blood of both, of both! for, doubtless, she has told *all* to HIM!"

This last thought redoubled the fury of the marquis. He raised his clenched hands towards heaven; then passing his burning fingers over his eyes, he reflected on the necessity of appearing calm in the presence of his servants, and returned to his bed-room in a state of apparent tranquillity. He there found Joseph.

"Well—the fowling pieces?"

"Here they are, my lord: they are all in excellent order."

"I'll try them. Has my lady yet rung her bell?"

"I do not know, my lord."

"Go and inquire."

As soon as the valet left the apartment, d'Harville hastily took from the gun-case that was before him a small powder-flask, some balls, and some caps, and locking the case, kept the key. Then, going to the end of the room, where the arms were arranged, he selected a pair of second-sized Manton pistols, loaded them, and without difficulty concealed them in the pockets of his walking surtout. He had scarcely done this, when Joseph returned with the intimation that the marchioness was in her dressing-room.

"Has my lady ordered her carriage?"

"No, my lord; I heard M. Juliette mention to the coachman, when he came for orders, that, as it is cold and dry, her ladyship, if she goes out at all will go on foot."

"Very well. Stay—I forgot. If I go out shooting, it will be to-morrow, or probably the next day. Tell William to look to the little green travelling carriage, this morning; you understand me?"

"Yes, my lord. But will not your lordship want your walking-cane?"

"No. Tell me, is there not a coach-stand near here?"

"Close by, my lord; corner of the Rue de Lille."

After a moment of hesitation and silence, the marquis continued:

"Go and inquire of Miss Juliette, if Lady d'Harville can be seen.

Joseph left the room.

"Yes," soliloquized the marquis, "it will be just as good as any other performance. Yes; I will visit her, and watch the soft and perfidious mask beneath which this wretch is doubtless meditating her adulterous designs; I will listen to the falsehoods that issue from her lips, while I read the very depths of her corrupted heart. Oh! it is indeed curious to study how a woman can look at you, speak to you, answer you, who the next moment is about to sully your name with one of those ridiculous yet horrible stains which can only be washed away with life-blood! Fool that I am! She will look at me with her usual sweetness and candour; she will greet me with the same pure smile she bestows upon her daughter, when she kisses her snowy brow, and hears her lisp her prayers. The eyes, the mirror of the soul! Ha, ha!" The unhappy man curled his lip with bitter contempt. "Alas! the more modest and pure the look, the more false and corrupt the heart. *She* is the proof of that, and I have been her dupe! Oh, madness! With what cool and insolent contempt she must have looked at me, when at the very moment, perhaps she was going to meet—THE OTHER—I have heaped upon her new proofs of my tenderness and esteem! I addressed her as a young, chaste, and devoted mother, in whom I had treasured the happiness—the hope of my whole life, at the very time she was going——oh! no, no, no!" cried Lord d'Harville, as his paroxysm momentarily augmented; "I will not see her—I will never see her—nor my child——I would betray myself, and compromise my just revenge!"

On leaving his apartment, Lord d'Harville, instead of going to the marchioness, merely said to her waiting-maid:

"You will tell Lady d'Harville that I wished to speak to her this morning, but I am obliged to go out for a short time. If it is perfectly convenient to her, we will breakfast together when I return, which will be about noon."

"Thinking that I intend to return," thought Lord d'Harville, "she will probably fancy herself the more at liberty to pursue her own plans."

He hastened to the coach-stand contiguous to his mansion, and entering a carriage, said:

"I take you by the hour, coachman."

"Very well, sir; it is now half-past eleven. Which way?"

"Rue Belle Chasse, corner of Rue Saint Dominique, pull up and wait by the garden wall there."

"Yes, master."

D'Harville pulled down the blinds: the coach went on, and soon arrived almost opposite to Harville House, at which point the marquis was so placed that no one could enter or quit his house unseen by him. The rendezvous was appointed for one o'clock; with his eyes fixed steadfastly upon his own door, the marquis waited in maddening suspense. His thoughts were whirled along by such a torrent of frightful feelings, that the time seemed to him to pass with an incredible rapidity. Twelve o'clock struck from the dome of St. Thomas Aquinas, when the door of the marquis's house was slowly opened, and Lady d'Harville stepped timidly into the street.

"Already!" exclaimed the wretched husband. "How punctual she is! She fears to keep THE OTHER waiting," said the marquis with scathing irony.

The air was piercing cold, and the pavement quite dry. Clémence wore a black bonnet, with a lace veil of the same colour, and a pelisse of currant-coloured silk. Her large cashmere shawl of deep blue descended almost to the hem of her dress, which she lightly and gracefully raised as she crossed the street. Thanks to this, the small taper foot and graceful ankle of Lady d'Harville was displayed, encased in a well-fitting satin boot.

Strange that, despite the bewildering ideas which crowded the brain of d'Harville at that moment, he noticed his wife's foot—and that foot and ankle had never looked more tempting. The sight maddened him. The idea of his rival presented itself, and the next instant all the ardent follies of his happy and devoted love for that woman retraced themselves on the tablet of his memory in lines of flame! Then, for the first time, he felt a dreadful pain in his heart, a cutting pang, that seemed to penetrate his soul, and extorted from him a hollow groan.

Hitherto his soul alone had been tortured; until now, he had thought only of the sanctity of outraged duties; but this last impression was so cruel that, as he half raised the blind, he could with difficulty conceal the agitation of his voice, as he said: "Coachman, you see that lady in the blue shawl and black bonnet, walking beside the wall?"

"Yes, sir."

"Follow her at a walking pace. Should she enter a coach at the rank where you took me up, stop till her coach goes on, then follow it."

"Yes, sir," said the coachman. "Come—here's to be some sport!"

Indeed, Lady d'Harville, as soon as she reached the stand, did call a coach, get in, and drive off, closely followed by the vehicle containing her husband.

They had not proceeded far, when his coachman took the road to Saint Thomas Aquinas Church, and, to the surprise of d'Harville, stopped exactly in front of it.

"Well! what are you doing now?"

"Why, master, the lady has got down at the church—I am blessed if she hasn't got a pretty little leg! Ha, ha! this is rich!"

A thousand conflicting thoughts now distracted Lord d'Harville. At first, he fancied that his wife, observing that she was followed, wished to battle pursuit. Then, again, he reflected that, after all, perhaps the letter which he had received was an infamous calumny. If Clémence were guilty, what could she gain by this pretence of piety? Would it not be an impious mockery? For an instant, a bright ray of hope shot across his mind, so great was the contrast between this devotion and the abominable crime of which his wife was accused. But, alas! this consoling illusion was of short duration. The coachman leant back on his seat, and said to him: "Master, the little lady is getting into her coach again."

"Follow her."

"Yes, master. Ha! ha! a high start, this! Rare sport, indeed!"

The coach reached the Quays, the Hotel de Ville, the Rue Sainte-Avoye, and, at length, the Rue du Temple.

"Master," said the coachman, turning round to M. d'Harville, "the other one has stopped at No. 17—we are at 13 now; shall we stop too?"

"Yes."

"Master, the little lady has gone into Number 17."

"Let me out."

"Yes, master."

In a few seconds the Marquis d'Harville had entered the passage, following the footsteps of his wife, who had already entered the house.

Urged by curiosity, Mrs. Pipelet, her dear Alfred, and the oyster-woman, were assembled on the threshold of the porter's lodge. The staircase was so dark that, on reaching it from without, the steps could scarcely be discerned. The marchioness, compelled to address Mrs. Pipelet, said to her, in a broken, scarcely audible tone: "Madam, where is the staircase, if you please?"

"Stop a moment; who might you want, madam?"

"I wish to see M. Charles, madam."

"Monsieur who?" replied the old woman, pretending not to have understood her, in order that her husband and the oyster-woman might have sufficient leisure to examine the features of the unfortunate lady through the folds of her thick veil.

"I asked for M. Charles, madame," replied Clémence, in a voice still more agitated than before, and hanging down her head, to con-

ceal her features from the stare of a familiar and insolent curiosity.

"Oh! M. Charles—very good; you spoke so low, that I could not hear you. Well, my little lady, as you want M. Charles, and a very handsome young man he is, go straight up; his door is opposite to you on the first floor."

The marchioness, overwhelmed with confusion, placed her foot on the first stair.

"He, he, he!" added the old woman, chuckling; "it seems it's all right to-day! Marriage for ever, say I!"

"The Commander has a tidy taste though, Mrs. Pipelet," said the oyster-woman, in a coarse voice: "she's a decent piece of goods, that!"

Had it not been for the necessity of again passing the lodge, which was occupied by these creatures, Lady d'Harville, half dead with shame and terror, would have descended instantly. She made a last effort, and reached the landing-place..... What was her stupor! She found herself face to face with Rudolph, who, putting a purse into her hands, said hastily: "Your husband knows all, and is following you——"

At this instant, the shrill voice of Mrs. Pipelet was heard, exclaiming: "Where are you going to sir?"

"It is he!" said Rudolph. Then he rapidly added, almost forcing Lady d'Harville towards the stairs of the second floor; "Hasten up to the fifth floor—say you have come to relieve an unfortunate family, named Morel."

"Sir, if you don't tell me who you are going to, you shall pass only over my body, as they did over our Old Guard at Waterloo!" screamed Mrs. Pipelet, as she placed herself in the way of Lord d'Harville.

Seeing, from the end of the alley, his wife stop to speak to the portress, the marquis had adopted the same course.

"I am accompanying the lady who just now went upstairs," said the marquis.

"Oh, that's a very different thing: you can pass," replied Mrs. Pipelet, taken all aback, making way for him.

Hearing an unusual bustle, M. Charles Robert half opened his door; Rudolph hastily entered the Commander's apartment, and closed the door upon them both, at the very instant that Lord d'Harville reached the landing-place. The prince fearing, in spite of the darkness, that the marquis might recognize him, had seized this opportunity to avoid coming in contact with him. M. Charles Robert, magnificently attired in his morning-gown of scarlet damask, gorgeously flowered with orange, and his Greek cap of embroidered velvet, stood for an instant completely astounded at sight of Rudolph, whom he had not seen at the embassy on the preceding evening, and who at this moment was very commonly dressed.

"Sir," said the Commander, angrily, "what is the meaning of this?"

"Silence!" said Rudolph, in a low but imperative tone, and with such an expression of agony in his features, that the Commander stood mechanically silent.

A loud noise, like that of a body falling and rolling down several steps, broke the silence of the gloomy staircase.

"Unhappy man!—he has murdered her!" exclaimed Rudolph.

"Murdered! who? What then is going on?" said M. Charles Robert, in a low voice, turning very pale.

Without replying to this inquiry, Rudolph partially opened the door, and saw little Hoppy hurriedly hobbling down the stairs, having in his hand the purse that Rudolph had given to Lady d'Harville. In another instant, Hoppy disappeared. The light footstep of Lady d'Harville, and the heavier one of her husband, who continued to follow her to the upper apartment of the house, could be distinctly heard.

Reassured of the safety of Lady d'Harville, but not understanding how the purse recently entrusted to her had come into the possession of the cripple, Rudolph said to M. Robert, with an air of authority: "Do not leave your room for the next hour at least."

"How, sir, not go out, if I please!" cried M. Charles Robert, in an impatient and angry tone. "And pray, who are you, that you dare dictate thus to me; and by what authority? Perhaps you'll tell me what all this means?"

"Lord d'Harville knows all; he has traced his wife to your very door, and he is at this instant following her upstairs."

"Oh; my God!" exclaimed M. Charles Robert, clasping his hands in stupefaction, "but what can she want at the top of the house? How will she manage to get out there?"

"Remain quietly where you are, until the portress gives you the signal," said Rudolph, and hurrying down to the lodge, he left the Commander in a state of nervous apprehension.

"Pray tell us all about it?" said Mrs. Pipelet, chuckling with delight: "the plot grows thicker and thicker! There's a gentleman following the little lady. No doubt, he is the dandelion—the husband. I guessed that at once, and so I let him go up. There will be murder between him and the Commander, and that will make a noise all through the quarter; and mobs of people will make holiday to come and see the house just as they went to Number 36, where a man was killed. I wonder we don't hear them fighting yet."

"My dear Mrs. Pipelet, will you do me a great service?" said Rudolph, putting five louis into the old woman's hand. "When the little lady comes downstairs, ask her how the poor Morels are going on: tell her that she does a real charity in assisting them, as she promised, when she called on you the last time to make inquiries respecting them."

Mrs. Pipelet, amazed, looked first at the money and then at Rudolph.

"How, sir! this gold for me—and this little lady—is not with the Commander?"

"The gentleman who follows her is her husband. Being warned in time, the poor lady has gone up to the Morels, as if she came here for the purpose of relieving them. Do you understand?"

"Do I understand? to be sure I do. A wink is as good as a nod to a blind horse. I am to help to 'do' the husband. That's the very thing I'm clever at! It's as easy to me as an old glove—ha! ha! wouldn't any one suppose that I had done nothing all my life but deceive a husband?"

Here the huge beaver of M. Pipelet was observed to throw its dark shadow across the semi-obscurity of the lodge.

"Anastasia," said Alfred, gravely, "have you then, like Cæsar Bradamanti, no respect for anything that is secret here on earth? There are things that should not be the subject of a jest, even in the welkin of friendship."

"Get along, you dear old creature: don't play the monk, and roll your big eyes about like billiard-balls; can't you see plain enough, I'm only joking? Do you not know, that there is no one on earth who can boast of having—but no matter. If I serve this young person, it is on account of our excellent lodger, who, for his generosity, may well deserve to be called the king of lodgers." Then turning to Rudolph, she said: "You shall see how I'll manage the matter! Will you just stand there, behind the curtain? Quick, quick! here they come."

Rudolph hastily hid himself. Lord and Lady d'Harville descended; the marquis gave his arm to his wife. When they arrived in front of the lodge, the features of Lord d'Harville expressed happiness, mingled with astonishment and confusion. Clémence was calm and pale.

"Well, my kind-hearted lady?" cried Mrs. Pipelet, stepping out of the lodge; "you have seen those poor Morels, then? Is it not enough to break one's heart? Oh! it is a real charity to assist them. The last time you were here, when you came to inquire about them, I told you that they were much to be pitied. Oh! depend upon it, you cannot do too much for such worthy people. Don't you agree with me, Alfred?"

Alfred, whose modesty, as well as his natural integrity, revolted at the thought of assisting in this anti-marital plot, replied by a grunt, as unintelligible as discordant.

"Pray excuse my Alfred, madame, he has the cramp in the lung, which makes him speak so that you can't understand him: else he would tell you as I do, that these poor creatures will pray to heaven to bless you, my worthy lady!"

Lord d'Harville looked at his wife with admiration, and said: "An angel! an angel! Oh, slander!"

"An angel!" repeated Mrs. Pipelet; "you are right, sir; and an angel of mercy, too!"

"Pray let us go," said Lady d'Harville, who felt that she was on the point of fainting under the excessive emotion which she had endured from the moment she had entered the house.

"Let us go, then," said the marquis; and, as they passed from the gloomy passage, he said to his wife: "Clémence, how much do I need your pardon and your pity!"

"Alas!" said the marchioness, sighing deeply, "who does not need pardon and pity?"

Rudolph came out of his lurking-place, deeply moved by the scene of terror mixed with the ridiculous and the vulgar: this odd termination of a mysterious drama which had brought into play so many different passions.

"Well now," said Mrs. Pipelet, "I hope I played my part well, eh?" Poor dear green-eyed monster, he should put his wife under a glass shade, and ticket it: 'Visitors are requested,' and all that. Poor dear man! it grieves me to pity him!—But, about your furniture, M. Rudolph: they haven't brought it yet."

"I am going to see about it. By-the-by, you can now tell the Commander that he may come down."

"True. What a game! isn't it! The poor Commander seems to have hired his apartment for the Dutch when they take Holland! Serves him right too, with his shabby twelve francs a month! This is the fourth time he has been made a fool of." Rudolph left the house. "Alfred," said Mrs. Pipelet; "it's the Commander's turn next; won't I have a famous grin at him!" She went upstairs and rang M. Charles Robert's bell, who instantly opened the door.

"Commander!" said the gentle Anastasia, carrying the back of her left hand to her wig in military style, "you are freed from arrest. They have gone off, arm-in-arm, the husband and the wife, under your very nose. That's no great matter to be sure! however, you have got out of a rare scrape—thanks to M. Rudolph! You ought to come down handsomely to him, I'm thinking."

"Is that slender gentleman, with moustaches, M. Rudolph, then?"

"Yes."

"And who and what is that *man?*"

"That *man*," returned Mrs. Pipelet, in a vexed tone, "is as good as another *man*, worth any two others! He is a bagman, the king of lodgers! who has but one room; he isn't stingy—not he! He gave me six francs for attending on him—six francs at the first word—six francs without bating!"

"Very good, very good; take my key."

"Shall we light the fire to-morrow, Commander?"

"No!"

"The day after?"

"No! no!" roared the Commander.

"Well, Commander, don't you remember, I told you that you would never get your salt at her table——"

M. Charles Robert cast a furious look upon the grinning portress, and rushing past her, left the house; utterly unable to comprehend how a commercial traveller, like Rudolph, could have discovered his appointment with the Marchioness d'Harville.

The moment the Commander left the passage, young Hoppy came hobbling up.

"Well, scapegrace, what do you want?" said Mrs. Pipelet.

"Has the one-eyed woman been here for me?" demanded the young Arab, without noticing the portress's question.

"What, Screech-Owl? No, you little monster. Why should she come after you?"

"Why, to give me an outing in the country, to be sure," said Hoppy, swinging on the door of the lodge.

"Has your master given you leave?"

"My father has asked M. Bradamanti to let me go hunt butterflies: 'I'd be a butter—I'd be a butter—but-ter-fly!'" chanted the son of Red Arm, humming and making a tambourine of the window-panes of the lodge.

"Leave off, you little rascal, you'll break the glass," exclaimed Mrs. Pipelet. "But here's a coach!"

"Oh! good! That's Owly!" said the urchin. "Oh what fun, to go in a four-wheeler!"

In fact, even through the windows and the red blind, one might discern the Owl's hideous and course profile. She beckoned to Hoppy, who ran to the coach. The coachman opened the door, and the little cripple got in. The Screech-Owl was not alone. In the other corner of the coach, wrapped in an old cloak with a furred collar, his features half hidden by a black silk cap, which descended to his eyebrows, sat the Schoolmaster. His red eyelids exposed (if we may be allowed to use the expression) *two dead-white eyes*—motionless, and without pupils, which added yet another horror to the spectacle presented by his seamed countenance, hideous, and veined by the extreme coldness of the day.

"Come, my kid, sit down upon my man's *pins;* you will keep him warm!" said the one-eyed woman to Hoppy, who crouched like a dog between the legs of the Owl and the Schoolmaster.

"Now, then," said the driver of the hackney-coach, "now for the *crib* at Bouqueval: *that's the ticket*, ain't it, Owl? You shall see I'm right on the 'light-trap' system."

"And, above all," said the Schoolmaster, 'touch 'em on the raw, and keep the tits a-moving, for if once they stop, it's all up with us getting a hold of the girl to-night."

"All right, Blinkers, you'll hear how they can scamper, when they feels their way."

"Shall I give you a tip?" said the Schoolmaster.

"Let out."

"Put on steam a-sliding through the gate; some of the custom-house sharks may twig you, seein' as you're an old chicken at smugg-er-ling!"

"I'm fly!" said the other, mounting the box.

From the slang that has been used, it will be readily judged that the driver was a robber, and a worthy companion for the Schoolmaster. The coach quitted the Rue du Temple.

Two hours afterwards, at the close of the day, the coach, containing the Schoolmaster, the Owl, and Hoppy, stopped in front of a wooden cross, marking out the sunken and lonely bye-road that led to Bouqueval farm, where Goualeuse resided under the protection of Mrs. George.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A VILLAGE IDYL.

FIVE o'clock sounded from the church of the little village of Bouqueval. The cold was intense, the sky clear; the sun sinking slowly behind the vast leafless woods that crowned the uplands of Ecouen, empurpled the horizon, and threw his pale slanting rays upon the extensive plains that lay glittering under their icy covering.

In the country every season has its peculiar charm of aspect. Now the dazzling snow changes the meadows into white plains of alabaster, gleaming in unspotted whiteness, beneath a sky of reddish-grey. Then as the twilight deepens, climbing the hill or descending into the valley, the belated farmer hastens to the snug shelter of his rural home; his horse, his cloak, his hat, all covered with snow. Stinging is the cold, icy and biting is the north wind, and darker and darker grows the advancing night: but below, amid the leafless trees, the little windows of the farm gleam cheerfully; and the tall brick chimney throws up a dense column of smoke, that tells the weary farmer of the blazing hearth, and the rustic supper awaiting him: to be followed by a pleasant, gossiping hour, and a warm and peaceful night, while without the wind howls, and the faithful watch-dogs bay the moon, or answer each other from afar.

Again, at early morn, the hoar-frost displays on every tree fantastic girandoles of crystal, to which the rays of the winter's sun lend the prismatic blaze of the diamond; while in the rich and humid furrows of the tilled lands the brown hare makes its form, and the grey partridge runs nimbly. Here and there is heard the melancholy tinkling of the bell-wether, as it leads the woolly flocks scattered on the grassy slopes of the hollow ways; while the shepherd, closely wrapped in his dark grey cloak, sings some rustic catch as he weaves an osier basket.

Occasionally the scene becomes more animated. Echo sends from afar the mellowed sounds of the huntsman's horn, and the musical cry of the opening pack; anon a startled deer bursts from the covert of the forest; flies, winged by terror, across the plain, and vanishes from sight in the other glades that skirt the far horizon. The sound of horns, the cry of the dogs, comes nearer and nearer; the white and liver-coloured hounds, in their turn, dart from the thickets; they course along the plain; they sweep among the fallows, and, with unerring scent, they follow the slot of the flying deer. At their heels come the scarlet-coated sportsmen, bending over the manes of their swift steeds, and animating the gallant pack with horn and tally ho! The noisy whirlwind passes swift as the lightning's flash; the sounds grow more and more faint; by degrees, all becomes hushed: hounds, horses, and huntsmen are in turn hidden in the far distant forest, where the timid deer has fled for safety. Then the touching and sublime calm of the peaceful scene is restored, and the deep stillness of the vast plains is broken only by the monotonous song of some solitary shepherd.

Such pictures, such rustic spots, abound in the neighbourhood of the village of Bouqueval; an oasis in the midst of a sort of desert, which, notwithstanding its proximity to Paris, is only to be reached by cross roads. Hidden during summer in the bosom of the deep woods, like some little nest amid the branches of some spreading tree, the farm which gave shelter to Goualeuse was now completely bereft of its leafy screen. The surface of the rivulet now hard frozen, looked like a long riband of dead silver, unrolled in the middle of evergreen fields, across which some fine cows were slowly returning to their sheds. Called home by the approach of evening, flights of pigeons alighted in rapid succession upon the pointed roof of the dove-cote; the immense chestnut-trees, which during the summer shaded the court and the farm-buildings, now disclosed tiled and thatched roofs, with large bright green or red-yellow patches of moss. A heavy waggon, drawn by three lusty, powerful horses, thick and glossy in their coats, and with large blue collars hung with little bells and decorated with tufts of scarlet wool, was conveying home wheat in sheaves from one of the stacks on the plain. This heavy vehicle entered the court-yard of the farm of Bouqueval at the same time that a numerous flock of sheep crowded in confusedly by a side entrance. Men and beasts seemed alike impatient to escape from the cold, and to taste the sweets of shelter and repose; the horses neighed their loud joy at sight of their well-known stables; the sheep bleated impatiently at the doors of their warm folds; while the labourers cast many a wistful glance towards the warm kitchen on the ground-floor, where they knew a Gog and Magog's supper was in preparation.

Throughout this farm there prevailed a rare and perfect order, a most minute attention to cleanliness. Instead of being covered with dry mud, thrown here and there, and exposed to all the changes and inclemencies of the weather, the harrows, ploughs, rollers, and other agricultural implements—many of which were of new invention—were arranged, clean and painted, under a capacious shed, into which the carters now also proceeded to place, with scrupulous arrangement, the harness of their horses. Spacious and clean, the well gravelled court-yard had none of those dung-hills, or puddles of stagnant water, which so commonly disfigure the finest farms of Beauce or Brie; and the poultry-yard, surrounded by a green trellis-work, shut in its feathered tenants, except when a little door was opened to allow them to wander over the adjacent fields. Without going too much into detail, we may say, in a word, that, in every respect, this farm was looked upon, and deservedly so, in all the country round, as a model farm; as well for the perfect order established there, as for the excellence of its system of agriculture, the consequent abundance of its harvests, and the happiness and good conduct of the numerous persons to whom it furnished employment, who were selected from among the best conducted labourers of the district.

We shall presently speak of the cause of this prosperous superiority. Meanwhile we conduct the reader to the trellised gate of the poultry-yard, which was in no respect inferior to the rest of the farm in the rustic elegance of its roofs, its nests, and its little brook edged with rock-stones, where there constantly ran clear water, which, even in this severe weather, was carefully kept free from the icicles which might have dammed it.

A sudden stir arose among the winged tenants of this charming spot; the cackling fowls flew from their perches, the turkeys gobbled, the guinea-fowls uttered their shrill squeaks, and the pigeons, descending from the dove-cote, cooed and strutted on the gravelled square. All this joyous bustle was caused by the appearance of Fleur-de-Marie.

Never did Greuze or Watteau imagine so charming a model as Goualeuse would have presented had her cheeks been fuller and more rosy; nevertheless, despite their delicate paleness, the expression of her countenance, the elegance of her figure, and the unstudied and perfect grace of her every attitude, were such as would have been well worthy of the pencils of the great painters we have named.

Marie's small round cap displayed her forehead with its bands of fair hair. In common with most of the peasant girls in the neighbourhood of Paris, above this cap, the crown and ears of which were always visible, she wore folded flat, and fastened behind with two pins, a large red cotton handkerchief, the floating ends of which fell negligently upon

her shoulders; a graceful and picturesque head-dress, which might be envied by Switzerland or Italy. A kerchief of white muslin, crossed over her bosom, was half hidden by the high and wide bib of her brown stuff apron; a bodice of coarse blue cloth, with tight sleeves, displayed her fine shape, and met over her thick winter petticoat of grey fustian striped with brown; very white stockings and sandalled shoes, half hidden in small black clogs, ornamented at the instep with a square of lambs' wool, completed this costume of rustic simplicity, to which the natural beauty of Marie imparted an inexpressible grace.

Holding in one hand the lower end of her apron, she took thence handsful of grain, and distributing them among the feathered crowd that surrounded her. One beautiful pigeon, of a silvery whiteness, with rosy beak and purple legs, more familiar and more presuming than his companions, after having strutted and fluttered around Fleur-de-Marie for some time, at length flew to her shoulder, and perched there. The young girl, used, no doubt, to these little liberties, went on distributing her grain with a liberal hand, but half turning her beautiful face, and smiling as she offered her ruby lips to the beak of her favourite. The last rays of the setting sun lighted up this simply beautiful picture with pale gleams of softened gold.

While Goualeuse was busied with her feathered cares, Mrs. George and Abbé Laporte, the pastor of Bouqueval, seated at the fireside, in the parlour of the farm, were speaking about this innocent girl—an always interesting topic of their conversation. The old priest, pensive, reflecting, his head drooping, and his elbows resting upon his knees, mechanically spread out his trembling hands to catch the genial warmth of the fire. Mrs. George, busied with her needlework, looked at the abbé from time to time, in expectation of a reply to some remark she had made. After a short silence, he said: "You are right, Mrs. George: it will be as well to acquaint M. Rudolph, that if he interrogates Marie, who feels such gratitude towards him, that she will probably avow to her benefactor what she conceals from us."

"Then, since you agree with me, sir, I will write to him this very evening, to the address which he has given me, in the Allée des Veuves."

"Poor child!" sighed the abbé, "so happy as she ought to be: what grief can it be that is now preying upon her?"

"Nothing can wean her from this sadness, sir; not even her earnest application to study."

"Yet she has made astonishing progress in the short time she has been under our instruction."

"Has she not, sir?" To learn to read and write, and to cipher well enough to help me to keep the books of the farm! and then, the dear little girl so actively assists me in everything, that I am as much delighted as surprised. In spite of all that I can say, she will exert herself so as even to alarm me for her health?"

"Fortunately, the negro doctor says that no bad consequences are to be feared from that slight cough which so much alarmed us."

"What a kind man M. David is! He takes so much interest in her—as everyone does who knows her. Here everyone respects and cherishes her; though that is not surprising either, for, thanks to the elevated and generous views of M. Rudolph, the people employed upon this farm are the best conducted labourers in the neighbourhood. But even the grossest and most indifferent natures would feel the influence of that gentleness, at once timid and angelic, which seems perpetually to be asking pardon. Unhappy child! as though she alone were culpable."

After a few minutes passed in silent reflection, the abbé resumed: "Did you not say that the sadness of Marie dated, so to speak, from the stay that Mrs. Debreuil—wife of the farmer to his Grace the Duke de Lucenay at Arnouville—made here All Saints' Day."

"Yes, M. le Curé, I fancied I noticed that; and yet Mrs. Debreuil, and especially her daughter Clara—who is a pattern of candour and kindness—felt the charm of Marie's gentleness and beauty, as everyone else does. both of them daily give her proofs of their friendship; and, as you are aware, our friends at Arnouville either come to see us on the Sunday, or we go to visit them. Well, it would almost seem as if each new visit augmented the melancholy of our dear child, although that kind-hearted Clara already loves her as a sister."

"In truth, Mrs. George, it is a strange mystery; what can be the hidden cause of this sadness? She ought to be so very happy now. Between her present and her past life, there is the difference that there is between heaven and the regions of the judged. Surely, one cannot accuse her of ingratitude?"

"Good heavens! she ungrateful?—she, so touchingly sensible to every slight attention! she, in whom we have ever found such natural delicacy of feeling! Does not the poor little girl almost exceed her physical strength in doing all that she can to earn her bread, as one may say? Does she not endeavour to repay by her services the hospitality that is afforded her? Nor is that all; except on a Sunday, when I require her to dress herself with some care and smartness to go to church with me, she chooses to wear clothes as coarse as those of the peasant girls around her. Yet, notwithstanding that, she has such a distinction about her, such an inherent grace, that even in that garb she is charming, is she not, M. le Curé?"

"Ah!" said the good priest, with a benevo-

lent smile, "there I recognize a slight touch of maternal pride."

At these words, the eyes of Mrs. George became suffused with tears: the bereaved mother thought of her long-lost son.

The abbé, guessing the cause of her sudden emotion, said: "Courage, madam! God has sent you this poor child to console you until the time when you are to recover your son. And then a sacred bond will attach you to this poor Marie; a god-mother, when she rightly understands the sacredness of that relation, is almost the mother of her god-child. As for M. Rudolph, he has given, so to speak, life to her soul, by rescuing her from the abyss of crime in which she was plunged, and has thus by anticipation discharged his duties as a godfather."

"Do you find her sufficiently instructed. M. le Curé, to administer to her that sacrament which, doubtless, the unfortunate girl has not received?"

"Just now, as she returned hither with me from the parsonage, I told her that the ceremony would be performed very probably in a fortnight."

"And she received the information with gratitude, for her heart is deeply imbued with religious feeling?"

"Alas!" said the Curé, she has grave offences to expiate."

"Nay, M. le Curé, consider how she has been situated. Abandoned so young, without resources, without advice, almost without knowledge of good and evil, thrown, spite of herself, into the paths of vice, how was it possible she should not have fallen?"

"Moral sense of right and wrong should have both enlightened and sustained her; and, moreover, did she ever make the attempt to escape from that horrible doom? Are charitable souls so rare in Paris?"

"Doubtless they are not, M. le Curé, but where are they to be sought? Before such could be discovered, how many refusals must be borne, how much indifference suffered! And then, for Marie, what was required was not a mere passing alms, but a continued interest, which would have put her in the way of earning an honest livelihood. Many mothers there are who would have pity upon her, I doubt not; but then she must first have had the happiness to become known to them. Ah! believe me, I have known and felt what it is to be in the extremity of poverty. But for one of those blessed chances which, alas! too late, threw poor Marie in the way of M. Rudolph; except, I say, for one of those providential casualties, the unfortunate, almost always brutally repulsed at their first solicitation, learn to believe that pity is not to be met with; and, urged by hunger, fierce, clamorous hunger, they often seek in vice the relief they despair to obtain from pity."

At this moment Goualeuse entered the parlour.

"Where have you been, my child?" asked Mrs. George, kindly.

"Visiting the fruit-room, madame, after I shut up the poultry for the night. The fruits have kept excellently, except a very few, which I have brought away."

"Why not have left that task to Claudine, Marie? I fear you have quite fatigued yourself again."

"Oh, no, madame, I am so pleased with my fruit-store! The smell of the ripe fruit is so delicious!"

"You must some day, pay a visit to Marie's fruit-store, M. le Curé," said Mrs. George—"You cannot conceive with what taste she has arranged it; garlands of grapes separate each species of fruit from the others, and these again, are divided into compartments by borders of moss."

"Oh, M. le Curé, I am quite sure the sight would please you," said Goualeuse, innocently. "You should see what a charming effect the moss has around the rosy apples and golden pears. There is one sort of apple, especially, so beautiful, of such delicate red and white, that they look like little heads of cherubim in nests of green moss," added the delighted girl, with the ardour of an artist describing his own picture.

The Curé smiled, as he exchanged a glance with Mrs. George, and said to Fleur-de-Marie, "I have already admired the dairy that you zealously direct, and it would, undoubtedly, satisfy the most skilful and industrious of housewives; one of these days, I will go and admire your fruit-store, with its beautiful rosy apples and golden pears; but especially I shall be prepared to admire those pretty cherub apples, peeping from their mossy nests. But see, the sun is fast setting; you will barely have time to conduct me back to the parsonage, and return before dark. Put on your cloak, my child, and let us be gone: yet, now I think of it, the cold is very severe; you had better stay at home, and let some one of the farm-people accompany me."

"Oh, M. le Curé, you will make poor Marie very unhappy if you insist upon that," said Mrs. George; "she is so delighted to escort you to your home every evening."

"M. le Curé," added Goualeuse, raising her large, blue, timid eyes to the countenance of the venerable priest, "I shall fear you are displeased with me, if you will not allow me to accompany you as usual."

"I displeased with you, poor child? No, no; so quick, quick with your cloak, wrap yourself up warm, and let us go."

Fleur-de-Marie hastily threw over her shoulders a sort of hooded pelisse of coarse grey cloth, edged with narrow black velvet, and offered her arm to the curate.

"Fortunately," said he, "the distance is but short, and the road is a safe one."

"As it is somewhat later than you are usually out," said Mrs. George, "would you

like to have one of the farm-labourers accompany you, Marie?"

"What a little coward they would think me!" said Marie, with a smile. "I thank you, madame, but pray do not think of troubling any one on my account; it is not a quarter of an hour's walk to the parsonage, and I shall be back before dark."

"I will not insist on it; for, thank heaven, we never hear of any vagrants in this neighbourhood."

"No! unless that were the case," said the Curé, "I would not accept the arm of this dear child, great assistance as it is to me." And, leaning on the arm of Fleur-de-Marie, who accommodated her light and agile step to the slow and tottering pace of the old man, the abbé quitted the farm.

A few minutes' walk brought Goualeuse and the priest to the hollow road where the Schoolmaster, the Screech-Owl, and Hoppy were lying in ambush.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE AMBUSCADE.

THE church and parsonage of Bouqueval stood on a hill-side in the midst of a chestnut grove, from which it looked down on the village. Fleur-de-Marie and the abbé gained a winding-path which led to the house, and crossed the hollow road by which the hill was diagonally intersected. The Screech-Owl, the Schoolmaster, and Hoppy, lurking in one of the deep hollows of this road, saw the priest and Marie descend into the ravine, and leave it again by the steep ascent. The features of the young girl were completely concealed by her hood, and the Owl did not recognize her former victim.

"Silence, my man!" said the old hag to the Schoolmaster; the wench and Old Amen have just crossed the path; it certainly is the same girl, according to the description given by the long 'un in mourning. Country-looking, middle stature, striped brown petticoat, and woollen cloak, with a black border. She every evening sees old *tithe pig* home to his stye, in this way, and then returns alone. When she comes back presently, we must fall upon her yonder, at the end of the road, and carry her off to the coach."

"Suppose she calls out for assistance," said the Schoolmaster; "they will hear her at the farm, if, as you say, you can see the outbuildings from here—for you *can* see! you two can," added he, in a hoarse voice.

"Oh, sure enough we can see the buildings from here," said Hoppy. "Just now I crawled up on my belly to the top of the slope, and I could hear a carter talking to his horse in the yard down yonder."

"Then, I'll tell you what must be done," said the Schoolmaster, after a moment's silence: "Hoppy must place himself on the watch, at the entrance to the path she has taken; and when he sees the girl returning, in the distance, he must run up to her, exclaiming that he is the son of a poor old woman who has hurt herself by falling into the ravine; and then he must beg the young girl to come and help her."

"I see, my blade; that poor old woman shall be your own Owl. You're *wide awake* still. My man, you are always the werry nob of *artful coves*. And when she comes, what must I do?"

"Keep yourself concealed in the ravine, on the side where Barbillon waits with the coach, and I'll hide myself pretty near you. When Hoppy's *gammoned* the wench into the middle of the ravine, leave off your groaning, and spring upon her: put one hook round her *squeeze*, and the other in her tater-trap, so as to *grab* her *red rag*, and prevent her singing out."

"Right, my blade! the same trick as we did with the woman of the Canal Saint-Martin, when we taught her to *swim*, after having *prigged the nigger* (black oilskin-covered box) she carried under her arm. This is to be the same *dodge*, eh?"

"Yes, the very same. While you keep fast hold of the girl, Hoppy will run to my hiding-place and lead me to you; then the three of us will bundle her up in my cloak, and carry her up to Barbillon's coach, who will drive us to the plain of St. Denis, where the long gent in black will be waiting for us."

"That's the way to *do the trick!* Where can they find your match! If I had only the coal, my beauty, I'd stick fireworks on your head, and illuminate you with coloured lamps, for a Saint John Ketch, patron of downy coves. And, you little monkey, do you hear? if you would be an *out-and-outer*, keep a bright eye upon my *longheaded* bully there—he's a model for you;" said the Owl, boastingly, to Hoppy. Then, addressing the Schoolmaster: "By the way, do you know that Barbillon is in a mad-dog fright lest he should have a Newgate tippet!"

"He be hanged!"

"The other day, returning from Mother Martial's, the knife-made widow, who keeps the *boozing-ken* on Mudlark's Island, Barbillon, the Big Cripple, and the Skeleton had a row with the husband of the *chalker* (milk-woman) who comes every morning from the country in a little cart drawn by a Jerusalem, to sell her milk in the City, corner of the Rue de la Vieille Draperie, close to the Ogress's of the 'White Rabbit,' and they *walked into him with their knives*."

The son of Red Arm, who had not gained the highest number of marks in slang, listened with a sort of disappointed curiosity.

"You would like to know what we were saying just now, wouldn't you, little mischief?"

"That I should. You were talking of Mother

Martial, who lives near Asnières. I know her well, and her daughter Calebasse, and François and Amandine, who are about my age, and who are made the footballs of all the house. But when you talked of *walking into* any one, that's all my eye, sure enough."

"To be sure it is; and if you're a good lad, I'll teach you to *patter flash*. You're just the age when it may be useful to you. Would you like to learn, little mischief?"

"Oh! I believe you; and I would rather stop with you than with my old thief of a quack doctor, pounding his drugs. If I knew where he hides his *ratsbane for men*, blest if I wouldn't pop some in his soup, and that would make our reckoning even."

The Owl laughed heartily, and said to Hoppy, drawing him towards her: "Come, ducky, and kiss his mammy. What a dear, droll boy it is! But how do you know that your master had rat-poison for men?"

"Why, 'cause I heerd him say so one day, when I was hid in the dark closet in the room where he keeps bottles, his brass machines, and where he's always messing with his little jam-pots."

"What did you hear him say?" inquired the Screech-Owl.

"I heard him say to a gentleman, as he gave him a powder done up in a paper: 'When you are tired of life, take this in three doses, and you will sleep without sickness or sorrow.'"

"Who was the gentleman?" asked the Schoolmaster.

"A handsome young swell with black moustaches, and a pretty mug like a nob's fancy. He came another time; and then, when he left, I followed him, by M. Bradamanti's order, to find out where he *roosted*. The pretty-faced gentleman went into a slap-up crib in the Rue de Chaillot. My master had said to me, 'No matter where this gentleman goes, follow and wait for him at the door. If he comes out again, dog his steps till he enters somewhere, and does not come out again, that will show that he lives there. Then Hoppy, my lad, I hope you'll hop about to find out his name, or I will hoperate on your corns in a style that will make you think you're in a mill-hopper!"

"Well?"

"Well, I did hop about, and found out his name."

"How did you come it?" asked the Schoolmaster.

"Oh, let your granny alone for nicking eggs! I'm not such a duffer. I goes to the porter at the house in the Rue de Chaillot, where this gentleman did not come out again; the flunkey had his wool powdered, with a fine brown coat, and a yellow collar laced with silver. So says I to him, 'My noble lord, I have come to ask for a hundred sous which the gentleman of the house promised me for having found his dog, and bringing of it back to him: a little black animal, called *Trumpet*. And, by the same token, the gentleman with dark features, with black moustaches, a white riding-coat, and light blue pantaloons, told me he lived at Number 11, Rue de Chaillot, and that his name was Mister Dupont.' 'The gentleman you're talking of is my master, and is My Lord the Viscount de Saint-Remy; we have no pup here but yourself, you swindling young scamp; so *make yourself scarce*, or I'll *tan your hide* for you, just to make you remember trying to *do* me out of a hundred sous,' says the porter, giving me a thundering kick. But that was nothing," added Hoppy, philosophically, "for I found out the name of the handsome young gentleman with black muffstashes, who came to my master's to buy the *ratsbane for men* who are tired of their lives. He is the Viscount de Saint-Remy—my—my—Saint-Remy," added Red Arm's son, dwelling on the last words, as was his custom.

"You want to make me eat you alive! you 'cute little poppet, you!" said the Owl, embracing Hoppy. "There's an artful one for you! He deserves to have me for his mother, dear little rascal!"

And the one-eyed hag embraced Hoppy with grotesque affection. The boy, deeply touched by this proof of affection, and all anxiety to show his gratitude, eagerly cried, "You only tell me what to do, and you shall see how I'll do it! I'll do anything you want me, I will!"

"Will you? Well, then, you shan't repent of it."

"Oh, I should like always to stay with you,"

"If you look out sharp, we shall see about your staying with us, my little man."

"Yes," said the Schoolmaster, "you shall lead me about like a poor blind man, and say you are my son; we will get ourselves into houses in this way, and then—thousand murders!" added the cut-throat, with sanguinary rage, "the Screech-Owl helping us, we'll make some glorious hits yet. I'll teach that devil of a Rudolph, who had me blinded, that I have not yet run the whole length of my tether. He has taken away my eyesight, but he has not made me incapable of planning mischief. I will be the head, Hoppy the eyes, and you the hand, my Owl! You will help me, won't you?"

"Am I not yours to the rope and gibbet, my blade? When I came out of the hospital, and heard that you had sent to inquire for me at the Ogress's, by the mouth of that clodhopper from St. Mandé, didn't I hasten off to you at the village, among those country turnips, telling them that I was your wife?"

These words of the one-eyed hag brought an evil reminiscence to the Schoolmaster's mind. Suddenly changing his tone and language towards the Owl, he said in a fierce voice, "Yes, I grew tired of being all alone among honest people; at the end of a month I could stand it no longer, I got frightened,

and then I thought of sending for you to come to me—and nicely I put my foot into it!" he continued, in a tone of increasing anger; "for the morning after your arrival I was stripped of the whole remainder of the money which that devil of the Allée des Veuves had given me. Yes, my belt, lined with gold, was stolen while I was asleep. Nobody but you could have done the trick so neat, and thus I am now at your mercy. Whenever I think of that, I don't know why I don't kill you upon the spot—you vile old thief!" and he made a hasty and angry stride towards the one-eyed hag.

"Take care of yourself if you hurt Screech-Owl!" cried Hoppy.

"I'll smash you both, you and her together, cursed vipers that you are!" cried the enraged ruffian. And hearing Red Arm's son speaking close to him, he aimed a blow of such terrible force at the boy, that, had it reached, it undoubtedly would have killed him. Hoppy, as much to avenge himself as the Owl, caught up a stone, took aim at the Schoolmaster, and hit him on the forehead. The blow was not dangerous, but painful for the instant. The ruffian became furious, raged like a wounded bull, and rushed forward several paces at random; he stumbled and fell.

"Go it, you cripples!" hooted the Owl, laughing till the tears ran down her cheeks.

Notwithstanding the brotherhood of blood which attached her to this monster, she, for many reasons, looked with a sort of ferocious joy upon the degradation and helplessness of this man, lately so terrible, and so vain of his giant strength. The one-eyed wretch thus, after her fashion, justified the frightful maxim of La Rochefoucauld, that "in the misfortunes of our best friends, we always find something that gratifies us." The hideous boy, with his lank yellow hair and weasel countenance, shared the Owl's merriment. The Schoolmaster stumbled again, when the imp exclaimed, "Open your peepers, old fellow; why don't you open your eyes? You tumble about all manner of ways, and cut such funny capers. Can't you see clear? Just give your spectacle glasses a rub!"

Finding the impossibility of catching the boy, the herculean murderer stopped, stamped his feet with fury, laid his broad hairy hands upon his eyes, and uttered a howl, hoarse and horrible as that of a muzzled tiger.

"What a bad cough you have got, old son," said Red Arm's hopeful. "*Only look*, here's some famous fog-drops—*look at it!* It was given me by a bobby; but don't let that put you out of conceit of it!" and taking up a handful of sand, he threw it in the face of the blind assassin.

Stung by the shower of gravel, the Schoolmaster suffered even more from this new insult than from the blow of the stone: turning visibly pale, even beneath his livid and hideous scars, he suddenly elevated his arms, crossed them with a gesture of inexpressible despair, and turning his frightful face towards heaven, exclaimed, in a voice of abject supplication, "My God! my God! my God!"

From a man, sullied with every shade of crime, and before whom the most determined villains lately trembled, this involuntary appeal to divine mercy seemed providential retribution.

"Ha! ha! ha! look at my pretty cut-throat making the sign of the cross!" cried the Owl, sneeringly: "Your head's turned the wrong way, my man. It is Old Scratch you should call to your aid."

"Oh, a knife! a knife! that I may kill myself; since all the world abandons me! A knife!" cried the despairing wretch; gnawing his fists with savage fury.

"A knife! You have one in your pocket, my blade, and a sharp one too. The little old man in the Rue du Roule—you know, one moonlight night—and the cattle-dealer on the Poissy Road, could tell the moles all about it by this time. But if you want to cut your stick, pull it out!"

The Schoolmaster, thus dared to do execution on himself, changed the conversation, and said in a surly and dastardly tone: "The Slasher had an honest heart; he took pity on me, and did not rob me!"

"What made you say that I had *prigged* your couters?" returned the Owl, scarcely able to refrain from laughter.

"Because only you entered my room," said the ruffian; "and I was robbed on the night of your arrival; who else would you have me suspect? Those poor country people wouldn't do such a thing."

"Why shouldn't the yokels snatch as well as other folks? Because they drink milk, and gather grass for their rabbits?"

"I've been robbed, and——"

"And is that your Screechy's fault? Do you think if I had your belt, I should have been fool enough to remain with you, after I had done the trick? What a dolt you must be to dream such a thing! You may safely take your oath that I would have cleaned you out, if I could: but, I'll take my oath, you would have seen me again—when I had got rid of it; for you please me more'n ever, with your white eyes, you beauty? Come, come, behave yourself pretty, and don't break your *dominoes* by grinding them that way."

"One would think he was cracking nuts," said Hoppy.

"Ha! ha! ha! that's just the thing, you dear little monkey! Come, cool yourself, my man: let the kid laugh, he's only a child. Confess, now, that you are down on me; for when the long gent in mourning, who always puts me in mind of a horse-cabby, said to me: 'Here is a thousand francs for you, if you will carry off a girl who is at the farm of Bouqueval, and bring her to a spot on the plain of St. Denis, which I shall point out to you,' answer me, cut-throat, did I not directly propose to you to be in the job, instead of

choosing some one who could see clear? Why, it's just like giving you so much money in charity—that's what it is; for, except to hold the wench still while me and Hoppy gag her, and pack her up, you'll be about as useful to me as a fifth wheel to a 'bus. However, let that pass, for although I would have robbed you, if I could, yet still I like to do you a good turn. I wish you to owe everything you have to your beloved Screech-Owl; it's a fancy I have. We shall give two hundred *shot* to Barbillon for driving us down in the coach, and for having come here once with a servant of the long gent in mourning, to nose about a place where we shall have to hide, in order to catch the little wench; and so we shall have left for you and I to enjoy ourselves, eight hundred *shot*. What do you say to that, eh? Are you still cross with your old woman?"

"How am I to know that you will give me anything at all when the job is done?" asked the ruffian, in surly distrust.

"Why, I might very easily get off giving you anything at all; for I have you in my frying-pan, my man, as I formerly had Goualeuse; so you may just let yourself be fried to my liking, until the *Baker*, in his turn, shall shove you into his *oven!* Ha! ha! ha! Do you still sulk with your Screechy?" added the one-eyed woman, slapping the shoulder of the man, who stood silent, and overwhelmed with despair.

"You are right," said he, with a sob of suppressed rage: "yes, you are very right, it is my fate! I—I to be at the mercy of a woman and a child, whom, a short time ago, I could have killed with a breath. Oh! if I were not so afraid of death!" cried he, falling back upon the bank.

"What a cur!—what a down-right lime-face you are!" said the Owl, contemptuously. "Pray, talk a little about your conscience; that will crown the joke! Well, if you have no more pluck than this, I shall take an airing, and leave you."

"And not even to be able to revenge myself upon that man, who, by thus martyring me, has placed me in this horrible position, from which I can never escape!" cried the Schoolmaster, with redoubled fury. "True! I have a great horror of death; but if any one would say to me, 'You shall have that man placed in your arms—between your arms—and then you shall both be thrown into a pit,' I would reply, 'Throw me, then, at once.' Yes, for I should be sure not to loosen my hold ere he and I both reached the bottom, and then, as we rolled over, I would fix my teeth in his face—his throat—his very heart! I would tear him to pieces with my teeth, my teeth!—for I should be jealous of a knife!"

"Capital, my blade! now I like you again. But be calm; we shall meet with him again yet, that beggar Rudolph, and the Slasher too. Courage, my man! we will yet have our will with both—yes, 'tis I that say it, they shall feel our teeth yet."

"And you will not abandon me, will you?" said the ruffian, in a tone at once submissive and suspicious. "If you now abandon me, what would become of me?"

"There, now you speak reason. I say, my blade, what a start it would be if Hoppy and I should bolt with the coach, and leave you here in the fields, and the night so pinching cold, too, I say, that would be a rum go, wouldn't it, old thief?"

At this threat the Schoolmaster trembled; he drew near the Screech-Owl, and said to her in a faltering voice, "No, no, you will not do that, Owl—nor you, Hoppy; that would be too wicked."

"Ha! ha! too wicked! Ain't he a flat? The little old man of the Rue du Roule, and the cattle-dealer, and the woman of the Canal Saint-Martin, and the gentleman of the Allée des Veuves, they must all have thought you very gentle and caressing with your *larding-pin*, no doubt!—and why should not you have a 'tater out of the same can?"

"I am in your power—don't abuse it," said the Schoolmaster, hoarsely, "Come, come, I see I was wrong to suspect you! I was wrong, also, in wishing to beat Hoppy; I beg your pardon; do you hear? and yours also, Hoppy—yes, I beg pardon of you both!"

"For my part, I will have him kneel down and beg pardon for having tried to beat you, Owl," said Hoppy.

"Dear little mumper, how amusing he is!" said the woman, bursting into a laugh; "but I should rather like to see what sort of a figure you would cut playing that game, my man! Come, down on your marrowbones, as if you were *pattering* love to your old mott; make haste, or we shall be angry and leave you, and I can tell you that in half an hour it will be dark night—though you don't look as if you thought so, old 'No-eyes!'"

"Night or day, what is the difference to him?" said Hoppy, mocking; "the gent always keeps his shutters up!"

"On my knees, then, I ask pardon of you, Owl, and of you too, Hoppy. There, will that content you?" said the ruffian, kneeling in the middle of the highway. "Now say that you will not abandon me."

This strange group, enclosed by the high scarped banks of the ravine, and lighted up by the red gleams of the fast-fading twilight, was hideous to behold. In the middle of the road, the Schoolmaster, on his knees, extended his powerful hands in supplication to the one-eyed hag; his thick, matted hair fell like a mane upon his livid brow; his red eyelids, preternaturally extended by terror, left the half of his motionless, rigid, glassy dead eyeballs exposed—the stare of a corpse! His formidable shoulders were bowed in supplication—this Hercules knelt, trembling, at the feet of an old woman and a child!

The one-eyed hag, wrapped in a red plaid

shawl, and having on her head an old cap of black lace, from which escaped some locks of grey hair, stood over the Schoolmaster with an air of haughty contempt. The bony, tanned, shrivelled, and livid countenance of the parrot-nosed old woman expressed a ferocious and insulting joy; her cat's eye sparkled like a burning coal, and a fiendish grin drew asunder her hairy lips, revealing three or four large decayed yellow teeth.

Dressed in a blouse with a leather belt, Hoppy stood upon one leg, maintaining his equilibrium by resting upon the woman's arm. The sinister countenance and cunning look of this ricketty child, of a complexion as yellow as his hair, expressed at this moment railing and diabolical triumph. The shadow thrown out by the steep wall of the ravine added to the frightfulness of this scene, half veiled by the fast increasing darkness.

"Promise me, at least promise me, that you will not abandon me!" repeated the Schoolmaster, whose alarm was increased by the silence of the pair enjoying his terror. "Are you no longer near me?" added the murderer, bending forward to listen, and extending his arms mechanically.

"Yes, yes, my man, we are here—don't be afraid of that. Cut your company, partner? I'd rather buss old rawhead without a nose! I must satisfy you, once for all, upon that point, so I'll tell you why I will never abandon you. Now, keep your ears open. I have always dearly loved to have some one thing under my claws—man or beast. Before I had the little Nimming Kid (may the *baker* send her back to me, for I have still my idea of skinning off her beauty with my vitriol)—before her, I had a brat who became a *stiff'un* through my nursing; it was for that one that I got six stretch; and during that time I amused myself, as well as I could, with torturing birds. I bought them to pluck alive; but I could not get my pennyworth out of them, the little wretches died so soon. When I came out of prison, Goualeuse fell into my hooks, but the little beggar slipped through my fingers, while her carcase would still have yielded some sport. After that, I had a little dog, who took her place, after a while; I cut off one paw before, and one behind, and it was so comic to see Toby stir his stumps, that I used to laugh till I almost burst."

"I must do that trick to a dog I know, that bit me once," said Hoppy.

"When I met with you, my man," continued the Owl, "I was rendering a cat miserable. Well, old boy, now you shall be my cat, my dog, my bird, my Nimming Kid—in a word, you shall be my beast of suffering. Do you understand, my man? Instead of a bird, or a child to torment, I shall have one we may call a wolf or a tiger. That's rather good, isn't it, eh?"

"Old fury!" cried the Schoolmaster, leaping from the ground with rage.

"Let's mizzle; he still scolds his dear old woman! Well, you can go, then, you are your own master!—Good night—old fickle-mind!"

"The gate of the field is open, so shake your freelegs, Bob, by yourself; keep straight on, and you'll find yourself—somewhere," said Hoppy, laughing heartily.

"Oh! death, death!" cried the Schoolmaster, wringing his hands fit to break each joint.

Suddenly Hoppy, stooping to the ground, said in a low voice, "I hear footsteps in the path. Let us lay low. It's not the girl, for the footsteps come the same way as she did."

A sturdy peasant-woman, in the prime of life, followed by a large sheep-dog, and carrying on her head a covered basket, appeared, crossed the ravine, and took the same path which the priest and Goualeuse had traversed. We will now rejoin these two personages, and, for the present, leave the three accomplices ambushed in the hollow way.

CHAPTER XXX

THE PARSONAGE.

THE last gleams of the sun had gradually disappeared behind the imposing mass of Ecouen Château, and the woods by which it is surrounded: on all sides, far beyond the reach of sight, extended immense plains, with their brown furrows, hardened by the frost—a vast solitude, of which the hamlet of Bouqueval appeared like an oasis. The western sky, splendidly serene, was variegated with long empurpled streaks—an infallible sign of cold and wind; which tints, at first of a deep red, soon deepened to violet, and then to a bluish black, as twilight crept upon the atmosphere. The crescent of the moon, clearly and delicately defined, like the half of a silver ring, began to shed a soft light in a centre of the dark azure, where a few stars already twinkled. The silence was absolute, the hour solemn. The pastor stopped for an instant on the hill, to enjoy the contemplation of this lovely evening. After a few minutes of silent meditation, he extended his trembling hand towards the expanse of the horizon, half veiled by the evening mists, and said to Fleur-de-Marie, who walked pensively beside him, "Look, my child, upon that immense space, to which we can no longer fix any imaginary limit. We hear not the slightest sound. Does it not seem as if its silence gave us an idea of infinity and of eternity! I say this to you, Marie, because you are sensibly alive to the beauties of the creation. I have often been touched at the religious and almost poetic admiration with which they have inspired you—you, poor bondswoman of sin, who were so long disinherited of them. Are not you, as I am,

struck with the solemn tranquillity which at this moment reigns around us?"

Goualeuse made no reply. Astonished at this, the clergyman looked at her—she was in tears!

"What ails you, my child?"

"Father, I am very unhappy."

"Unhappy?—you! unhappy still?"

"I know that I have no right to complain of my lot, after all that has been done for me; and yet——"

"And yet?"

"Oh! father, forgive me this grief; perhaps it will offend my benefactors."

"Listen, Marie: we have often asked the cause of the sadness which sometimes overwhelms you, and which has caused your second mother such extreme uneasiness. You have avoided replying to us, and we have respected your secret, whilst we have suffered from our inability to soothe your woes."

"Alas! my father, I cannot describe to you what passes within me! I have been moved, as you are, by the aspect of this calm scene. My heart was bruised, and—and I wept."

"But what ails you, then, Marie? You know how you are beloved; come, tell me all. Moreover, I have something to tell you. The day is not far distant when Mrs. George and M. Rudolph will present you at the baptismal fount, and pledge themselves before God for your protection during life."

"M. Rudolph—who saved me?" cried Fleur-de-Marie, clasping her hands; "will he deign to give me this new proof of affection? Oh, father! I must indeed no longer hide anything from you, lest I should be deemed ungrateful!"

"Ungrateful! how?"

"That you may understand me, father, I must speak to you of my early days at the farm."

"I will listen to you: we can talk as we walk along."

"You will be indulgent, will you not, father? What I have to say to you may perhaps be very wrong."

"The Lord has proved to you that He is merciful. Be of good cheer."

"When, on arriving at the farm, I was told that I should never leave that place, nor Mrs. George," said Fleur-de-Marie, after a moment's reflection, "it seemed that I was walking in a delightful dream. At first I was completely bewildered with excess of happiness. Every instant I thought of M. Rudolph. Very often, when I was alone, in spite of myself, I lifted my eyes towards heaven, as if to seek him there, and thank him. In truth—and I accuse myself for so doing, my father—I thought more of him than of heaven; for he had done for me what I thought heaven only could do. I was happy—happy as one who has for ever escaped from some awful peril. You and Mrs. George were so kind to me, that I then deemed my past conduct to be rather pitiable than blameable."

The priest looked at Goualeuse with surprise. She continued: "By degrees I accustomed myself to this life, so peaceful and retired. I no longer was alarmed lest, when I woke, I should find myself again with the Ogress—I felt, so to speak, safety in my sleep. All my delight was to assist Mrs. George in her labours, and apply myself to the lessons which you, my father, gave to me, and to profit by your exhortations. Except some moments of shame, when I thought on the past, I fancied myself the equal of every one, because every one was kind to me, till one day——"

Here the speaker's utterance became choked by sobs.

"Come, come, calm yourself, my dear child; take courage: go on."

Goualeuse, drying her eyes, resumed: "You remember, father, when on All Saints' Day, Mrs. Debreuil, wife of the farmer to the Duke de Lucenay, at Arnouville, came to spend some time here with her daughter?"

"I do; and I was glad to see you become acquainted with Clara Debreuil: she is endowed with the best qualities."

"She is an angel, father—an angel of goodness. When I learned that she was to stay for several days at the farm, I was overjoyed; I counted the moments that were to elapse before the arrival of that much-wished companion. At length she came. I was in my room, which she was to share with me, busying myself in setting it off to the best advantage for her reception! I was sent for. My heart beat violently when I entered the parlour, and Mrs. George, presenting me to the pretty young lady, who looked so gentle, modest, and kind, said, 'Marie, here is a friend for you.' 'And I hope,' added Mrs. Debreuil, 'that you and my daughter will soon be like two sisters.' Scarcely had her mother said those words before Clara ran to embrace me. Then, my father," continued Fleur-de-Marie, in tears, "I know not what suddenly passed within me; but when I felt Clara's pure face pressed upon my polluted cheek—that cheek became burning with shame—remorse; I remembered who and what I was. Such as me receive the caresses of a virtuous girl——"

"But, my child——"

"Oh, father!" cried Fleur-de-Marie, interrupting the other with painful emotion, "when M. Rudolph took me from the City, I had already become conscious of my degradation. But can you doubt that education, advice, the examples I receive from Mrs. George and yourself, have not, by enlightening my mind, made me, alas! comprehend that I have in truth been more culpable than unfortunate? Before the arrival of Clara, whenever these thoughts distressed me, I dispelled them by increased exertions to please Mrs. George, and you, my father. If I had blushed for the past, I had blushed only in my own privacy; but the sight of that young

girl, of my own age, so charming, so virtuous, convinced me of the distance which separated me from her for ever. For the first time, I felt that there are stains which can never be effaced. From that day forth, this thought has never left me; in spite of myself, I incessantly dwell upon it—in a word, I have not since had one moment of peace."

Goualeuse now dried her streaming eyes. After regarding her for a few moments, with an expression of the most tender pity, the priest said: "But consider, my child, that, if Mrs. George wished you to be the friend of Clara Debreuil, it was because she knew that your conduct rendered you worthy of such a connection. Your self-reproaches, therefore, almost address themselves to your excellent second mother."

"I know that, my father, and doubtless I was wrong; but I could not subdue my feelings of shame and fear. When Clara became settled at the farm, I was as melancholy as I had hitherto been happy in thinking of the pleasure of having a companion of my own age; she, on the contrary, was all mirthfulness. A bed was made up for her in my room. On the first night, before she retired to rest, she embraced me and told me that she loved me already, and felt herself attached to me. She asked me to call her Clara, and she would call me Marie. Then she prayed, telling me that she would join my name with hers in her supplications, if I would also unite her name with mine. I dared not refuse that. After having talked some time longer, she fell asleep; I had not yet got into bed, I approached her, I wept as I looked at her angelic countenance; and then, as I reflected that this innocent creature was thus unconsciously sleeping in the same room with me, who had so lately been with that dreadful Ogress, among thieves and assassins—I trembled as if I had just committed some great crime. I had vague and terrible fears: it seemed to me that God would some day punish me. I laid myself down, and had frightful dreams, in which I again saw the wicked faces, which I had nearly forgotten till then, of the Slasher, the Schoolmaster, and Screech-Owl, the one-eyed woman who so tortured my childhood. Oh! what a night! good heaven, what a night! and what dreams!" cried Goualeuse, shuddering at the remembrance.

"Poor Marie!" said the Curé, with emotion, "why did you not sooner reveal to me these sad secrets? I should have comforted you. But proceed."

"I had closed my eyes so late, and I was still sleeping when I was roused by Clara's caresses. To overcome what she called my coolness, and give me a proof of her sincere friendship, she wished to confide a secret to me—she was to be married, she said, as soon as she should complete her eighteenth year, to the son of a farmer at Goussainville, whom she loved tenderly The marriage had for a long time been agreed upon between the two families. Then, in a few words, she related to me the history of her life—a life so simple, calm, and happy! She had never yet quitted her mother, and she would never have to leave her, for her husband was to take part in the management of the farm with M. Debreuil. 'Now, Marie,' said she to me, 'you know me as well as if you were my sister; so tell me all about your early days.' I thought I should have died of shame. I blushed and stammered; I did not know what Mrs. George had said of me, and I was fearful of telling a falsehood. I answered that I had been an orphan, brought up by very severe people: that I had not been happy in my infancy, and that my happiness was dated from the moment I came to live with Mrs. George. Then Clara, as much by interest as curiosity, asked me where I had been brought up—was it in the city or the country? what was my father's name? Above all, she asked if I had any recollection of my mother. All these questions embarrassed me as much as they pained me, for I was obliged to reply with falsehood, and you have taught me, father, how wicked it is to utter an untruth. But Clara did not think I could deceive her. She attributed the hesitation of my answers to the pain which my early sorrows renewed; she believed me, and pitied me with a sincerity that cut me to the soul. Oh, father, you never can know what I suffered in this first conversation, and how much it cost me to have to utter no words save those of falsehood and hypocrisy!"

"Unfortunate girl! the anger of Heaven will weigh heavily on those who, by casting you into the dreadful road of perdition, have compelled you to bear all your life the awful consequence of a first fault."

"Oh, yes, they were indeed cruel, father," replied Fleur-de-Marie, bitterly, "for my shame is ineffaceable. As Clara talked to me of the happiness that awaited her—her marriage, her peaceful joys of home, I could not help comparing my lot with hers; for, in spite of the kindness bestowed upon me, my fate must always be miserable. You and Mrs. George, in teaching me what virtue is, have taught me the depth of that abasement into which I had fallen; nothing can take from me the stain of having been linked with all that is vilest in the world. Alas! if the knowledge of good and evil was to render me so sad, why was I not left to my unhappy fate?"

"Oh, Marie, Marie!"

"Father, I speak wickedly, do I not? Alas I dare not confess it to you; but I am at times so ungrateful as to repine at the blessings heaped on me, and to say to myself: 'If I had not been snatched from infamy, why, wretchedness, misery, blows, would have terminated my life, and at the least I should have died in ignorance of a purity which I must for ever regret."

"Alas, Marie, that indeed is fatal! A nature however generously endowed by the

Creator, even be it plunged for but a day in the slough from which you have been rescued, must ever retain an ineffaceable blot."

"You clearly see, father," said Fleur-de-Marie, in tones of the most agonizing grief, "that I must despair even till death!"

"You must despair of effacing that desolating page from your life," said the priest, in a sad and serious voice; "but you should hope in the infinite mercy of the Almighty. Here on earth, my poor child, tears, remorse, and expiation, are your lot: but some day, on high," added he, pointing to the firmament, now studded with stars—"on high, you will have pardon and eternal happiness!"

"Mercy, mercy, Almighty Creator, I am so young, and my life may yet be so long!" said Goualeuse, in a thrilling tone, as she involuntarily fell upon her knees at the feet of the good abbé.

The priest was standing on the brow of he hill, not far from the parsonage. His black cassock, his venerable countenance, shaded by his long white hair, and softly illumined by the twilight, were reflected by the deeply transparent sky, now pale at the west, but sapphire at the zenith. The priest lifted one of his trembling hands to heaven, and gave the other to Fleur-de-Marie, who bedewed it with tears. The hood of her grey cloak, falling at this moment upon her shoulders, disclosed the beautiful profile of the young girl—her charming features full of suffering, and suffused with tears.

This simple and yet grand scene offered a contrast—a strange coincidence—with the horrible picture which almost at the same moment was to be seen in the depths of the hollow way, between the Schoolmaster and the Screech-Owl. Concealed in the shadows of a deep ravine, a prey to the most dastardly terrors, a frightful murderer, suffering the punishment due to his numberless crimes, was also kneeling—but before his accomplice—a reviling and avenging fury, who tormented him without mercy, and urged him to new crimes—his accomplice, the first cause of the misery of that same Fleur-de-Marie who was tortured by never-dying remorse! Is not the exaggeration of her grief easily conceived? Surrounded from her very infancy by degraded, wicked, and infamous beings; exchanging a prison for the vile den of the Ogress—a prison still more horrible: only escaping the precincts of the gaol to plunge into the cavernous streets of the City, this unfortunate young girl had hitherto lived in profound ignorance of the beautiful and the good, as much a stranger to noble and religious sentiments as to the magnificent splendours of nature. All that is admirable alike in the creature and in the creation was at once revealed to her astonished soul! At this imposing spectacle her mind expanded, her intelligence became developed, her noble instincts were awakened; and it was *because* her mind became expanded, her intelligence developed, and her noble instincts awakened, that, having a consciousness of her former degradation, she experienced for her past life a torturing and incurable horror, and felt, alas! as she herself said, that there were stains which can never be effaced!

"Oh, my unhappiness!" said Goualeuse, in despair. "Had my whole life as long to run, and were it as pure as yours, my father, it must henceforth be sullied by the consciousness and memory of the past: woe is me!"

"No, no, quite otherwise, Marie, happiness is for you. Your remorse, so full of bitterness, but so salutary, proves the religious susceptibility of your soul. How many are there who, less nobly endowed than you, would, in your situation, have speedily forgotten the past, and thought only of enjoying the happy *present!* Believe me, each pang that you now endure will be recorded in the world to come. The Lord has left you in the evil way for a brief moment, to reserve to you the glory of repentance, and the eternal recompense due to expiation. Hath He not Himself said: 'Those who fight the good fight, and come to me with a smile on their lips, they are my elect; but they who, wounded in the struggle, come to me fainting and dying, they are the elect of my elect.' Courage, therefore, my dear child; support, help, advice, nothing will be wanting to you. I, indeed, am very old: but Mrs. George and M. Rudolph have still long years of life before them; especially M. Rudolph, who has taken so much interest in your welfare; who watches your steps with such an enlightened solicitude."

Sweet-throat was about to reply, when she was interrupted by the appearance of the peasant woman of whom we have spoken, who, following the same road as Marie and the Curé, now came up with them. She was one of the farm-servants.

"Excuse me, M. le Curé," said she to the priest; "Mrs. George told me to carry this basket of fruit to the parsonage, and said that I could, at the same time, see Mdlle. Marie home, for it is getting late. I have brought Turk with me," added the woman, caressing an enormous dog of the Pyrenees, a match for a bear in strength. "Although no one is ever molested in this neighbourhood, it's quite as well to be prepared."

"You are right, Claudine; but here we are at the parsonage. You will thank Mrs. George in my name."

Then, lowering his voice, and addressing himself to Goualeuse, the priest said, in a grave tone: "To-morrow I am obliged to attend the diocesan conference; but I return at five o'clock. If you wish it, my child, I will await you at the parsonage; for I see, by the state of your mind, that you have need of further conversation with me."

"I thank you, father," replied Fleur-de-Marie; "I will come to-morrow, as you are so kind as to permit me to do so."

"But here we are now, at the garden gate," said the priest. "Set the basket down there, Claudine; my housekeeper will take it in. Return as quickly as you can to the farm with Marie, for it is almost dark, and the cold increases. To-morrow, Marie, at five o'clock."

"To-morrow, father."

The abbé entered his garden; and Goualeuse and Claudine, followed by Turk, took the road to the farm.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE FLASH-IN-THE-PAN.

THE night was clear and frosty. Following the Schoolmaster's advice, the Owl had accompanied him to a low part of the road, remote from the path leading to the parsonage, and nearest to the cross-road where Barbillon awaited them with the coach. Posted on the watch, Hoppy awaited Fleur-de-Marie's return, whom he was to draw into the snare by begging her to help him in succouring a poor old woman. Red Arm's son had advanced some steps out of the ravine, the better to look for Marie, when, attentively listening, he heard Goualeuse speaking to the peasant woman who accompanied her. The plot had failed; and Hoppy again hastened down into the ravine, to warn the Screech-Owl. "There is some one along with the young woman," said he, in a low whisper, out of breath.

"May the meat-axe chop her neck through, the little beggar!" exclaimed the Owl, furiously.

"Who is she with?" asked the Schoolmaster.

"No doubt the peasant wench who passed along the road just now, followed by the big dog. I heard a woman's voice," said Hoppy. "Hark!—listen!—don't you hear the noise of their wooden shoes?" In the silence of the night the steps rung distinctly on the hard frozen ground.

"There are a pair on 'em; I can manage the girl in the grey cloak, but how are we to do about the other? My blade can't see, and Hoppy is not strong enough to make *cold meat* of her companion—the devil choke her! What can be done?" repeated the Owl.

"I'm not strong, but, if you like, I'll throw myself between the legs of the peasant woman with the dog; I'll hold on there with tooth and nail, and I'll not leave go, depend upon it! While I do that, Screechy, you can easily drag away the little one?"

"If they call out or resist, they will be heard at the farm," said the one-eyed hag; "and there will be time for the people there to come to their assistance before we can get to Barbillon and the coach. It's no such easy matter to carry a woman against her will!"

"And they have a big tareyer with them," said Hoppy.

"Bah, bah! if that was all, I could settle the brute with a kick," said the Owl.

"They are close by," said Hoppy, again listening to the sound of their footsteps; "they are coming down into the ravine!"

"Speak, can't you, my blade?" said the Owl to the Schoolmaster; "what do you advise, you scholard? Are you dumb?"

"Nothing can be done to-day!" responded the ruffian.

"And the thousand *shot* of the gent in mourning," cried the Owl, "are they to go to *blazes*? I say, no! Your knife—your knife, my bludger! I'll kill the woman, to prevent her disturbing us; and as for the little one, me and Hoppy can easily manage to stop her jaw."

"But the man in mourning does not expect us to kill any one."

"Well, can't we put down the claret as an *extra* in his bill? He'll be ready enough to pay us, for he'll be lugged in as an accomplice."

"Here they are—just coming down!" said Hoppy, in a low voice.

"Your knife, my man!" said the Owl, in a whisper.

"Oh, Owl!" cried Hoppy, alarmed, and stretching out his hands entreatingly to the one-eyed hag; "that is coming it too strong to kill her. Oh, no, no! do not do that!"

"Your knife, I say!" repeated the Screech-Owl, in a low tone, without heeding the boy's supplications, and hastily putting off her shoes. "I have taken off my shoes," she added, "that I may steal on them from behind like a wolf; it is already dark, but I shall easily recognize the little one by her cloak, and I'll soon settle the other."

"No!" said the robber, decisively, "it is all over for to-day; there will be time enough to-morrow."

"What! afraid, old white-liver?" cried the Owl, with fierce contempt.

"I am not afraid," said the Schoolmaster; "but you might miss your blow, and spoil all."

The dog which accompanied the peasant-woman, no doubt scenting the persons concealed in the hollow of the road, stopped short, and barked furiously, refusing to come to Fleur-de-Marie, who called him repeatedly.

"Do you hear their barker? Here they are. Your knife!—or, if not——" cried the Screech-Owl, in a threatening tone.

"Come, then, and take it from me—by force!" said the Schoolmaster.

"It's all over: it's too late, now," said the Owl, after listening attentively for a moment; "they have gone by. Oh, gallows-bird, you shall pay for this!" added the fury, shaking her fist at her accomplice. "A thousand francs lost through your blundering!"

"A thousand—two thousand—perhaps three thousand francs gained!" said the

Schoolmaster, in a tone of authority. "Listen to me, Owl. You will go and rejoin Barbillon; he will drive you to the rendezvous where you are to meet the gentleman in mourning, and you will tell him that, though nothing can be done to-day, the girl shall certainly be carried off to-morrow. She goes every evening alone, to conduct the old priest home; it's only by accident she this evening has had a companion on her return. To-morrow will give us a better chance; to-morrow, therefore, at the same hour, you will be at the cross-road with Barbillon and his coach?"

"But what will you do with yourself?"

"Hoppy shall lead me to the farm where the girl is living. I'll hatch up a story: I'll say we have lost our way, and ask leave to sleep at the farm, in some corner of the stable. Nobody can refuse that. Hoppy shall carefully examine the doors, the windows, and all the ins and outs of the house. These farm-people have always plenty of money at quarter-time. The farm, you say, is in a lone spot; when once we know the ways of it, we can easily return with some friends, and the thing may be easily done."

"*Downy* as ever! There's a member for Parliament!" said the Owl, modified. "Go on, my blade."

"To-morrow morning, instead of quitting the farm, I will complain of pain which prevents me from walking. If they do not believe me, I will show them the wound on my leg, that I still retain from smashing the ankle-ring of my fetters, and always suffer from. I will say that the wound is owing to my being struck by a bar of red-hot iron when I was a workman. They will be sure to believe me, and I shall be allowed to stay at the farm part of the day, which will give Hoppy time to examine everything. In the evening, at the hour at which the little wench goes to see the priest home, I will say that I feel better, and am able to set out on my journey. I and Hoppy will follow the girl at a distance, and await her return here, in the ravine. Having seen us at the farm, our appearance will not cause her any suspicions. Hoppy and I will speak to her. Come within our reach once, I'll answer for the rest. I'll keep her safe enough, and we shall have our thousand francs. But that is not all; in two or three days, we can put Barbillon, or some one else, *fly* to the business to be done at the farm, and then take our *regulars*, putting them *up to the plant*."

"Oh, my blind blade, where can they find your match?" said the Owl, embracing the Schoolmaster. "Your plan is a famous one! Harkie, when you grow quite infirm, you must turn *advising-prig*; you will make as much money as any *thieves' advocate* among them. Come, kiss your old woman, and be off, for these country folk go to roost with the birds. I will go and join Barbillon; to-morrow afternoon, at four o'clock, he and I will be at the cross-road with the *drag*, unless between whiles he is *grabbed* for helping the Big Cripple and the Skeleton to *settle* the milk-woman's husband in the Rue de la Vieille Draperie. But, if not, some one else can drive me down, as the pretended hackney-coach belongs to the tall gent in mourning. A quarter of an hour after my arrival at the cross-road, I will be here waiting for you."

"All right. To-morrow, Owl?"

"What a fool I am! I had nearly forgotten to give Hoppy the wax to take with him to the farm, in case there should be any locks to have the squeeze. Here, dear little scamp, do you know how to use it?" said the one-eyed woman, handing a bit of wax to Hoppy.

"Yes, yes; father put me up to that. I took for him the impression of the lock of a little iron box, which my master the quack-doctor keeps in his dark closet."

"That's good; and that it may not stick, take care to moisten it well, after you have heated it in your hand."

"Heard that afore," interrupted Hoppy.

"To-morrow, then, my blade," said the Owl.

"To-morrow!" replied the Schoolmaster.

The Screech-Owl hobbled off to the coach, and the Schoolmaster, led by Hoppy, emerged from the road, and proceeded towards the farm, the cheerful lights that shone from its windows serving to direct them.

Strange fatality, that thus led Anselm Duresnel towards his wife, whom he had never seen since his condemnation to penal service with hard labour for life!

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE EXE.

IS there a sight more cheering than the kitchen of a large farm-house at supper-time—more especially in the winter season? Can anything convey a better idea of the calm and the happiness of rural life? Of the truth of this, the farm of Bouqueval afforded a fine proof. Its immense chimney, six feet high and eight feet wide, resembled the wide mouth of some glowing furnace, as the pile of oak and beechen logs blazed up its blackened throat. This enormous fireplace sent forth as much light as heat into every part of the kitchen, and rendered the lamp which was suspended from the main beam that ran across the ceiling quite superfluous. Ranged on appropriate shelves were every description of copper cooking utensils, shining in all the brightness of elaborate cleanliness, and reflecting the glowing radiance of the winter fire. A large old-fashioned vase of the same metal shone and sparkled like a mirror; close by a highly-polished bread-box, made of walnut-tree wood, waxed till it shone mirror-like, which exhaled a tempting smell of hot bread. A

long and substantial table, covered with an extremely clean, coarse table-cloth, occupied the centre of the spacious room; the place of each of the guests being marked by an earthenware plate, brown without and white within, and by a steel knife, fork, and spoon, bright as silver. In the middle of the table, a huge tureen, filled with vegetable soup, smoked like a volcano crater, covering with its savoury steam an immense dish of bacon and greens, and another not less formidable dish of stewed mutton and potatoes. Lastly, a roasted quarter of veal, flanked by winter salads, faced two baskets of apples and two cheeses, and completed this abundant repast. Two or three capacious stone jugs, filled with sparkling cider, and as many loaves of white bread, almost as large as millstones, were at the discretionary use of the farm hands.

An old shaggy black sheep-dog, almost toothless, the honoured senior of the canine population of the farm, was allowed to remain in the chimney-corner, in consideration of great age and former services. Using this privilege with modesty and moderation, he lay perfectly still, with his muzzle upon his outstretched fore-paws, and watched with attentive eye the various culinary evolutions which preceded the supper. This venerable dog answered to the somewhat pastoral name of "Lysander."

Perhaps the standing dishes of the people of this farm, though very simple, may appear to some rather luxurious, but Mrs. George (faithfully fulfilling the wishes of Rudolph in this particular) did all that was possible to ameliorate the lot of these labourers, exclusively selected from among the most honest and industrious husbandmen of the neighbourhood. They were liberally paid, and their treatment was in every respect such as to render their service a happy and enviable one. Hence, to be hired at the farm of Bouqueval was the ambition of all the best labourers of the district—a wholesome ambition, because it tended to the profit of the masters they served; for it was useless to apply for any vacant place on this farm, unless the applicant was provided with an excellent character. Rudolph had thus created, though on a very small scale, a sort of *model farm*; destined not merely to the improvement of the breeds of animals and of agricultural operations, but also, and more especially, to the *improvement of man;* and this end was attained in making it the *interest* of those employed to be honest, active, and intelligent.

After having completed the preparations for supper, and placed upon the table a can of wine, to accompany the dessert, the farm-cook proceeded to ring the bell. At this joyful summons, ploughmen, cow-boys, dairy-maids, and poultry-wenches, to the number of twelve or fifteen, thronged gaily into the kitchen. The men had a frank and hearty appearance, the women looked healthy and good-humoured, while the young maidens seemed active and sprightly. Every face of this happy party was lighted up with frankness, gaiety, and contentment; and they seemed fully prepared to do honour to the repast, which they had fairly earned by the hard toils of the day.

The head of the table was occupied by an old white-haired labourer, the trustworthy and bold expression of whose countenance, and rather smiling mouth, bespoke him a fine specimen of the sound-hearted peasant—keen-witted, steady, rustic, shy, a genuine descendant of the ancient Gauls. Father Chatelain (for so this Nestor was named), having been constantly employed on the farm from his childhood, was now engaged as overlooker. When Rudolph purchased the farm, the old servant was strongly recommended to him; Rudolph, consequently, retained him, and invested him, under Mrs. George, with a sort of superintendence of the details of labour. Father Chatelain, therefore, exercised an influence due alike to his age, his experience, and his knowledge.

All the labourers and servants having taken their places, Chatelain, after invoking a blessing, in an audible voice, pursuant to an old and pious custom, made a cross upon one of the loaves with the point of his knife, and cut from it a piece as the share of the Virgin—or of the poor; then, under the same prayer, he poured out a glass of wine, and having placed both bread and wine on a plate, it was reverently set in the centre of the table. At this moment the yard-dogs began to bark violently. Old Lysander answered them by a low growl, and, drawing up his lip, displayed two or three still formidable fangs.

"Some one must be passing by the walls of the farm-yard," said Father Chatelain.

Scarcely had he uttered these words, ere the bell of the principal entrance was rung.

"Who can come so late?" said the old labourer; "all our own people are in. Go and see who it is, Jean René."

Jean René, a young farm-lad, regretfully returned to his plate a spoonful of soup, at which, when spoken to by Chatelain, he was in the act of blowing with a force that might have shamed Æolus, and left the kitchen.

"This is the first evening for a long time that Mrs. George and Mdlle. Marie have been absent from the chimney-corner at supper-time. I am very hungry," said Father Chatelain, "but I shall enjoy my supper the less on that account."

"Mrs. George has gone up to Mdlle. Marie's room; for, on her return from seeing M. le Curé to the parsonage, mademoiselle did not feel well, and went to bed directly," remarked Claudine, the sturdy peasant-woman who had escorted Marie home from the parsonage, and thus, though unconsciously, baffled the Screech-Owl's wicked design.

"Our kind Mdlle. Marie is not seriously ill, I hope?" asked the old labourer, anxiously.

"Oh no, she is not, Father Chatelain. Mrs. George says it is only a slight attack," replied Claudine; "if it had been anything serious, she would have sent to Paris for the negro doctor who was so attentive to Mdlle. Marie when she was ill. For my part, I couldn't abear a black doctor; if he came to me, I shouldn't put the least trust in him. A white doctor's all very well, and Christian-like; but——"

"Did not M. David cure Mdlle. Marie, who was very ill and languid when she first came here?"

"Yes, Father Chatelain."

"Well?"

"That's all very good, but there's something very frightful in having a black doctor——"

"And did he not set old Mother Anique upon her legs, though the wounds in them had almost confined her to her bed for three years?"

"Yes, yes, Father Chatelain."

"Well, my girl?"

"Yes, Father Chatelain, but only think!—a black doctor! Only think—black, quite black!"

"Listen, my girl. What colour is your heifer, Musette?"

"White, Father Chatelain—white as a swan, and a famous milcher she is! One may say that without fear of telling a lie."

"And your other favourite, Rosette?"

"Black as a raven, Father Chatelain; and she is a famous milcher, too; for we must speak truth of all."

"And what colour is the milk of the black heifer?"

"White, Father Chatelain—white as snow, of course."

"As white and as good as that of Musette?"

"Yes."

"Although Rosette is black?"

"Yes, although Rosette is black; but, what can the difference be as to the milk, whether the cow be black, red, or white?"

"Well then, my girl, why should not a black doctor be as good as a white one?"

"Well," answered the peasant-woman, after a moment of deep cogitation, "it seemed to me that his skin—but, in fact, as the black Rosette gives as good milk as the white Musette, the skin can have nothing to do with the matter."

These physiognomical reflections of Claudine, upon the difference between the black and white races, were interrupted by the return of Jean René, who was now as lustily blowing his fingers as he previously had his soup.

"Oh, how cold! how bitter cold it is to-night!" said Jean René, as he entered the kitchen; "it freezes sharp enough to split a flint. The inside's the best *side* of the house this weather? Oh, ain't it a freezer!"

"A frost that comes in with a north-easterly wind will be hard and long; you should know that, my lad. But who rang the bell?" asked the overlooker.

"A poor blind man, and a little boy who leads him, Father Chatelain."

"And what does this blind man want?"

"The poor man and his son were going by the cross-roads to Louvres, and have lost their way in trying to make a short cut. As it is cold enough to freeze a wolf, and the night is very dark, they have come to ask leave to pass the night at the farm in a corner of the stables."

"Mrs. George is so kind, that she never refuses hospitality to the unfortunate; there is no doubt that she will shelter this poor man and his son; but her leave must be asked. Go and tell her about it, Claudine."

Claudine disappeared upon her errand.

"And where is the poor fellow waiting?" asked Father Chatelain.

"In the little barn."

"And why did you put him into the barn?"

"If I had left him in the farm-yard, the dogs would have eaten him and his boy up alive! Yes, Father Chatelain, it was no use my saying, 'There's a good Medor! here, Turk! down Sultan!' I never saw such wild beasts. And yet they are never taught here, as they are at many farms, to fly at poor people."

"Faith, my children, the *poor man's share* has been warrantably laid by this evening. Sit a little closer—there, that'll do; now, lay two more plates and knives—set one for the poor blind man, and one for his son; for certainly Mrs. George will let them pass the night here."

"Well, after all, there is something very strange about the raging of the dogs," said Jean, "especially Turk, that Claudine took to the parsonage this evening; he was just as though he were mad. When I patted him, to try and quiet him, the hair of his back was bristled up like a hedgehog. Now what do you, who know everything, think of that, Father Chatelain?"

"Why, my lad, I, *who know everything*, think that beasts often know more than I do. At the time of the storm last autumn, when the little river was suddenly swelled into a rolling torrent, as I was coming home with my horses, at dark night, riding on the old roan horse, Coco, deuce take me, if I should have known how to hit upon the ford, for you could see no farther than you could in an oven. Well, I threw the bridle on the neck of the old roan, and he found by himself what neither I nor any one else could have found for him. Now, where did old roan read about that?"

"Yes, indeed, Father Chatelain, who could have taught the old roan horse that?"

"The same Almighty Wisdom that taught the swallows to build their nests in the caves, and water-wagtails to build theirs in the midst of the reeds, my lad. Well, Claudine!" said the aged oracle of the farm to the milk-

maid, who at this moment returned, bearing on her arm two pairs of snow-white sheets, which gave out a sweet odour of sage and thyme—"well, has Mrs. George ordered supper and shelter here for the poor blind man and his son?"

"Here are the sheets to put upon their beds, in the little room at the end of the passage," said Claudine.

"Now then, Jean René, go and tell the poor man and his son to come in. And you, my girl, put two chairs near the fire; no doubt the poor creatures will be glad of a good warm before sitting down to supper."

The furious growling of the dogs was again heard, mingled with the shouts of Jean René, who was vainly endeavouring to pacify them. The door of the kitchen was suddenly thrown open, and Hoppy and the Schoolmaster rushed in, as though they had been pursued.

"Pray keep your dogs off!" cried the Schoolmaster, in great alarm: "they have been trying to bite us."

"They have torn a piece out of my blouse," said Hoppy, yet pale with fright.

"Excuse it, my good man," said Jean René, shutting the door; "I never saw our dogs so savage before. It must be the coldness of the night that makes them so sharp: the poor brutes have no reason, and perhaps they think to warm themselves by biting some one."

"And here goes the other at it now!" cried the husbandman, stopping old Lysander, who starting from his snug berth before the fire, growled fiercely, and was about to fly at the strangers. "The old dog has heard the others barking so furiously, that I suppose he thinks he must do the same. Go and lie down, you old savage—lie down, sir."

As these words were accompanied by a very significant kick, Lysander, still growling, resumed his favourite place in the chimney corner. All this time, Hoppy and the Schoolmaster, afraid to venture any farther, had remained trembling at the kitchen door. The ruffian's face was so truly hideous, that for an instant some of the labourers were struck with alarm, while others recoiled with disgust. This impression did not escape Hoppy; the fear of the peasants served to reassure him—he felt proud of the terror inspired by his companion. This first impression past, Father Chatelain, solely intent upon the duties of hospitality, said to the Schoolmaster: "Come up to the fire, my good man, and warm yourself first, and then you can sup with us; for, luckily, you have just come as we were about to begin. There, sit down. But what is my silly old head running upon?" added Father Chatelain; "it is not to you that I should speak, but to your son, as you are unfortunately blind. Here, my boy, lead your father up to the chimney-corner."

"Yes, my kind gentleman," Hoppy replied, in a nasal, whining, hypocritical snuffle! "may the good Lord reward your charity to the poor blind! Follow me, poor father—follow me; take care how you step—gently!" and the boy guided the steps of the miscreant with affected care and tenderness, till they both stood by the ample chimney-place. At first, Lysander confined himself to a low growl, but, after scenting the Schoolmaster for an instant, he broke out suddenly into that long, dismal baying, which is popularly called *howling for death*.

"What, in the devil's name can this mean?" muttered the Schoolmaster to himself: "can these accursed animals smell the blood? I had on these trowsers the night the grazier was murdered!"

"Did you see that? It's very strange," whispered Jean René; but the moment old Lysander caught scent of the old man, he set up the *death-howl!*"

But another strange event followed. The howl of Lysander was so loud, and mournful, that the other dogs heard him (for the farmyard was only separated from the kitchen by a glazed window), and, according to the custom of the canine race, they quickly answered these boding wails, which, according to popular belief, unerringly foretoken the approach of death. Although but little given to superstition, the peasants looked at each other with a feeling akin to terror. The Schoolmaster himself, notwithstanding his hell-born audacity, shuddered for an instant on hearing the death-predicting howlings which burst forth on the arrival of him—the self-convicted assassin. Hoppy alone, atheistical, corrupted, so to speak, at his mother's teat, a downright Parisian scamp, of all present, remained utterly insensible to the moral effect of this scene. Delivered from the fear of being bitten by the dogs, the mocking abortion laughed in his sleeve at what caused so much alarm and perplexity to the inhabitants of the farm, and even a momentary shudder of convulsive horror to the Schoolmaster himself.

The first bewilderment passed, Jean René went out into the farm-yard, and the loud cracking of his whip soon put an end to the lugubrious presentiments of Turk, Medor, and Sultan. By degrees, the saddened and perplexed countenances of the labourers cleared up, and, in the course of a few minutes, the frightful hideousness of the Schoolmaster inspired more commiseration than horror. They pitied the poor little lame boy for his infirmity, saw something very interesting in his sharp visage, and praised him highly for the anxious attentions which he bestowed upon his afflicted father. The appetite of the labourers, forgotten for the moment, returned with new energy, and for some minutes nothing was heard but the clatter of knives and forks. Still, while vigorously attacking the substantial meats, both males and females remarked, with a tender interest, the attention of the boy to the poor blind man, by

whom he was seated. Hoppy cut up his meat for him, sliced his bread, and poured out his drink, with the utmost filial attention. This was the fair side of the picture; we will now reverse it.

Instigated as much by a natural spirit of cruelty as the desire of imitation so natural at his age, Hoppy experienced a kindred enjoyment to that of the Owl in torturing the Schoolmaster; like her, he found a fiendish pleasure in having something to torment—*a beast of suffering* in a muzzled tiger! He had, moreover, the malignity to refine on his cruel pleasure by forcing the Schoolmaster to endure his ill-treatment without even frowning; and he accordingly balanced each outward expression of tenderness towards his supposed father by a severe kick, under cover of the table, especially aimed at an old open sore which the wretched man, like many old convicts, bore upon his right leg, at the place where he had worn the heavy ring by which he was attached to the chain during his imprisonment at the galleys. This persecution called for the more stoical endurance on the part of the ruffian, inasmuch as the little monster always seized the moment when the unhappy Schoolmaster was either speaking or drinking.

"Here, poor father, is a nut nicely shelled and skinned," said Hoppy, as he placed one of those fruits carefully detached from its husk on the Schoolmaster's plate.

"That's a good boy," said Father Chatelain; then, addressing the brigand, he added: "No doubt, poor man, you are much to be pitied; but it must, nevertheless, be some consolation to you to have so excellent a son!"

"Yes, yes, my misfortune is great," said the brigand, "and but for my dear child's affection, I——"

The agony of the Schoolmaster was such, that he could not repress a piercing cry. Red Arm's son had this time kicked him on the very centre of his wound; the pain was beyond endurance.

"Good heaven! Alas! what is the matter, my poor, dear father?" asked Hoppy, in a half-crying voice; and rising from the table, he threw his arms round the Schoolmaster's neck. In the first fierce impulse of pain and rage, the latter resolved to strangle the little cripple in his herculean arms; and so closely, and with such fell savageness did he press him to his broad chest, that the boy, all but suffocated, uttered a hollow groan. But reflecting, in time, that he could not do without Hoppy, the Schoolmaster restrained his passion, and merely pushed his persecutor back on his chair. In all this, the simple peasants had perceived nothing more than an interchange of parental and filial tenderness; and Hoppy's pallor and half-strangulation were attributed to the excessive emotion of this *exemplary son*.

"What is the matter with you, my good man?" asked kind-hearted old Chatelain; "the cry you gave just now actually made your poor boy turn pale. Poor little fellow, I declare he can hardly breathe."

"It is nothing," said the Schoolmaster, who had now regained his coolness. "I am a working locksmith by trade, and some time ago, while I was forging a bar of hot iron, I let it fall on my leg; the burn was so severe that it is even yet not healed up. Just now, I chanced to hit my limb against the leg of the table, and the sudden pain forced me to cry out."

"Poor, dear father!" said Hoppy, recovering from his *emotion*, and casting a fiendish look at the Schoolmaster; "poor father! Oh, kind gentlemen, it is but too true that he has never been able to get his leg cured. Alas! never. Oh, I wish I could bear the pain for him, poor, dear father!"

The women looked at the speaker compassionately.

"It is unfortunate for you, my honest man," said the Chatelain, "that you did not chance to come to this farm about three weeks ago, instead of this evening."

"Why so?"

"Because, at that time, we had here, for some days, a doctor from Paris, who has a sovereign remedy for all ailments of the legs. There was a good old lady in our village, who could not walk for three years past; the doctor applied his unguent to her wounds, and now she skips along as nimbly as a young girl, and says that she will soon go on foot to Paris, to thank her saviour, who lives in the Allée des Veuves. That is a pretty smart step from here, you must own—and—but what's the matter with you now?—that confounded wound again?"

The words *Allée des Veuves* had awakened such terrible recollections in the mind of the Schoolmaster, that he had been unable to repress a shudder, and a visible contraction of his hideous features.

"Yes," replied he, trying to conceal his mental suffering, "I had another cruel, shooting pain, just then."

"A great pity," resumed Father Chatelain, "it is a real pity that you did not chance to come while that excellent doctor was here; but he is as charitable as he is skilful; and when you go to Paris, get your son to lead you to his house; I am sure he will cure you. His address is easy to remember: Number 17, Allée des Veuves. If you even forget the number, it will not much matter; there are not many doctors in that quarter, and more especially, there are not many black doctors; for, strange as you may think it, this kind-hearted doctor, M. David, is a negro."

The Schoolmaster's countenance was so deeply and profusely scarred, that the ghastly paleness which now overspread it could with difficulty be perceived. He did, however, turn pale—frightfully pale—as he heard Chatelain repeat the number of Rudolph's house, and speak of that David, that negro doctor,

who, by order of Rudolph, had inflicted upon him that dreadful punishment of which he was every instant experiencing the awful consequences.

Father Chatelain, who had not observed the ruffian's paleness, went on: "However, when you leave us, I will give the written address of the doctor to your son, and M. David will feel pleased at the opportunity to render you a service. He is so kind—never so happy as when enabled to relieve suffering. I wish he had not always such a melancholy look. But come, friend, let us drink a cup to the health of your future benefactor!"

"Thank you, I'm not thirsty now," said the Schoolmaster, sullenly.

"But it is not cider that I am pouring out now—it is old wine; there are not many tradesmen who drink such, I can tell you. Ours is not like most farms. What do you think of our usual living?"

"It is very good," said the Schoolmaster, mechanically, for he was becoming more and more absorbed in his own evil thoughts.

"Well, this is the way we live every day. Good work and good living, a good conscience, and good sleep; in four words—this is our life. There are seven of us labourers here; and without boasting, I may say that we do the work of fourteen; but then we are also paid like fourteen. To common labourers, our good master gives a hundred and fifty crowns a year: and to the dairy-women, and other females about the farm, sixty crowns! —and then we divide equally among us all a tenth of the profits of the farm. I'faith, you may easily believe we do not let an inch of the land lie idle; for the more Dame Nature produces, the more we have to share among us."

"Your master cannot enrich himself much, if he is so liberal to you," said the Schoolmaster.

"Our master? Oh, he is not like other masters; he has a way of enriching himself, peculiarly his own."

"How do you mean?" said the blind man, anxious to engage in conversation, that he might escape from the black thoughts which haunted him: "your master must be a most extraordinary man."

"Out of the common run in everything, my good friend. Now mark this; mere chance has brought you to this house, lying, as we do, so much out of the main road: it is most likely that you will never return here; so I will not let you go without at least knowing what our master is, and what he has made this farm—not as a secret, but on condition that you repeat it to any one you choose. You shall hear; for it does one as much good to talk about it, as to hear of it."

"I am all attention," replied the Schoolmaster.

"And you will not be sorry to listen to what I tell you," said Father Chatelain to the Schoolmaster. "Just fancy that one day our master said to himself: 'I am very rich, and that is a very good thing; but as my riches cannot make me dine twice a day, suppose I give food to those who do not dine at all, and enable worthy men to live well, who now, in spite of all their efforts, fare badly? Ah, that is a pleasure which will just suit me—so I'll set about it at once.' And our master did set to work accordingly. He bought this farm, which was then in no very flourishing state, scarcely employing two ploughs—and being born and bred in the place, I should know something about it. Then our master bought more land, and added to the farm: you will presently see why he did so. At the head of the farm he placed a worthy woman, as respectable as she has been unfortunate—it is always such persons that he selects—and he said to her: 'This house shall be, like the house of God, open to all the good, and closed against all the hardened and bad; all idle beggars shall be driven away from it, but to the honest and industrious it shall always afford the charity of employment: *that* charity does not degrade the receiver, and profits the giver; and the rich man who does not afford that charity, is an unworthy steward of his riches!' It was our master who said that, and he said rightly; but he did better than merely saying good words—he acted upon them. Formerly, there was a direct road from our village to Ecouen, which shortened the distance by a league, but it was so cut up, so furrowed, in such a dreadfully bad state, that to pass along it was cruelty to horses and ruin to the carriages. A little statute-labour, and a trifling amount of money from each farmer around us, would have sufficed to put the road in good condition; but each of them was just as unwilling to help in putting it into order, as he was desirous of seeing that done at the expense of any one but himself. Our master, seeing this, said: 'The road shall be repaired, but as it will benefit those who ought to contribute towards it, yet will not, and, moreover, is more than anything else a holiday-making road, it will, in the long run, benefit those who have horses and vehicles—so be it; but first of all it shall benefit those who have nothing but their arms and heart to work, and yet no work to do. So, for instance, supposing a sturdy fellow knocks at the farm-door, and says: 'I am hungry, and in want of work,' he shall have for his reply: 'Here, my lad, here is a good meal, and there are a pickaxe and a spade; one of these men will show you our road to Ecouen, if you do not know it; every day do two toises of paving, and every evening you shall have forty sous; do only one toise, and you shall have twenty sous; only half a one, and you shall have only ten sous; do none, and you shall have nothing.' Then, towards evening, when I came in from the fields, I used to go to the road, to examine and measure their work."

"Ah! and only to think that there were two lazy rogues vile enough to eat their meal, and then steal the pickaxe and spade!" said

Jean René, indignantly; "wasn't that enough to turn any one against doing good?"

"Yes, that they did!" exclaimed several of the labourers.

"Well, but, my lads," resumed Father Chatelain, "shall we neither sow nor plant, because the caterpillar, the weevil, and other destructive insects prey upon the leaf, and devour the grain? No, no; we will not abstain from sowing and planting—we do a better thing, we destroy the insects. The great God, who is no niggard of his bounty, causes the tree to put out new buds, and the bread-corn to shoot up again; the damage is repaired, and we cannot even perceive where the mischievous insects have passed on their destroying journey. Am I not right, my friend?" said the old labourer to the Schoolmaster.

"No doubt, no doubt," replied the latter, who for some moments appeared to be lost in deep reflection.

"As for women and children," resumed Chatelain, "there is also work for them, proportioned to their age and strength."

"And, notwithstanding," said the dairy-woman Claudine, joining in the conversation, "the road does not get on very fast."

"Well, my girl, that only shows that, fortunately, there are not many honest men in the neighbourhood in want of employment."

"But an infirm and helpless creature, like myself, for instance," said the Schoolmaster, suddenly—"would the charity of your master grant me a corner at your fire, and a shelter for the short time I have to live? Oh, my kind people, if this could be, I would pass my whole life in blessing and in thanking your good master."

At the moment the words of the ruffian were sincere. Not that his heart was touched by remorse for his crimes, but the peaceable and happy existence of these labourers the more strongly excited his envy, when he reflected upon the frightful future planned for him by the Screech-Owl—a future which he had been far from foreseeing, and which made him the more regret that, by again sending for his accomplice, and putting himself in her power, he had for ever rendered it impossible to live with the honest people with whom the Slasher had placed him. Father Chatelain looked at the Schoolmaster with astonishment.

"Why, my poor man," said he, "I did not suppose you were so utterly without resources?"

"Alas! it is too true. I lost my sight by accident, while working at my trade. I am now on my way to Louvres, to seek a distant relation, who may perhaps assist me; but, you know—you understand—people are sometimes so selfish, so hard-hearted," said the Schoolmaster.

"But surely the most selfish could not refuse help in such a case as yours," replied Father Chatelain; "a good and honest workman like you, overtaken by a sudden calamity, with so gentle and good a child, would soften a heart of stone. But how is it that the master who employed you before your accident has done nothing for you?"

"He is dead," said the Schoolmaster, after a moment's hesitation; "he was my only protector."

"But there is the Hospital for the Blind."

"I am not old enough to be admitted."

"Poor man, you are, indeed, much to be pitied."

"Well, do you think that, if I fail of procuring at Louvres the help that I seek, your good master, whom I already respect, though I do not know him, would take pity upon me?"

"Why, unfortunately, you see, the farm is not a hospital. Usually all that is granted here to the infirm is food and shelter for a day or a night; that done, they have a trifle given them in the hope, and with the prayer, that a kind Providence will aid them."

"Then you think there is no hope of interesting your master in my sad fate?" said the robber, with a sigh of regret.

"I only tell you the general rule, my good man; but our master is so kind and compassionate, that he is capable of any goodness."

"Do you think it?" exclaimed the Schoolmaster; "is it possible he may allow me to live here in some corner? So very little would make me happy!"

"As I said before, our master is capable of any good act. Should he consent to your remaining here, at the farm, you will have no occasion to hide yourself in a corner; you will fare exactly as we do—as you have done to-day. Some employment would be found, suitable to your boy's strength. Good advice and good example would not be wanting. Our venerable Curé would instruct him with the other children of the village, and he would grow up, as we say, in well-doing. But to bring all this about, mind you, it is necessary to-morrow morning that you speak out freely to Our Lady of Ready Help."

"How!" said the Schoolmaster.

"That is the title we give our mistress. If she will interest herself for you, your suit is at once decided; in matters of charity, our master never refuses anything to her."

"Oh, then, I will speak to her, I will speak to her!" exclaimed the Schoolmaster, joyously, already fancying himself delivered from the tyranny of the Owl.

This delightful hope found no echo in Hoppy's breast, who did not feel at all disposed to profit by the advantages held out to him by the old labourer, and "*to grow up in well-doing*," under the auspices of a venerable Curé. Red Arm's son had tastes by no means rustic, and a mind as little as possible leaning to the pastoral; moreover, devoted to the Owl's instructions, he would have been sadly mortified to have seen the Schoolmaster

withdraw himself from their joint despotism. He wished, therefore, to recall the brigand, who was already revelling in flowery meads and smiling day-dreams, to a sense of his actual position.

"Oh, yes!" repeated the Schoolmaster, "I will speak to your mistress; she will take pity upon me, and——"

At this moment Hoppy spitefully dealt the Schoolmaster a vigorous kick, so well directed, that it took effect in the old spot. Intense agony cut short the ruffian's speech, who merely iterated, after an agonized trembling: "Yes, I hope that this good lady will have pity upon me."

"Poor, dear father," whined Hoppy: "but do you, then, quite forget, my dear aunt, Mrs. Owl, who is so fond of you? Poor Aunt Owl, oh, she will not desert you like that, depend upon it! Far more likely would she be to come here with our cousin, M. Barbillon, to take you away."

"Mrs. Owl and Mr. Barbel? Why, this good man seems to have relations among the birds and fishes!" whispered Jean René, with a mocking grin, and dealing his neighbour a poke with his elbow. "Funny cousins, ain't they, Claudine?"

"Get out, you great heartless booby, you!" said Claudine, returning the elbow-thrust with force enough to endanger two or three of his ribs; "how can you make game of such poor creatures?"

"Is Mrs. Owl a relation of yours?" inquired the labourer of the Schoolmaster.

"Yes, one of our kinswomen," replied he, in a sad and desponding voice.

"And is she the relation you are going to seek at Louvres?" asked Father Chatelain.

"Yes," said the miscreant; "but I fear my son deceives himself in reckoning so much on her kindness. However, that will not prevent me from speaking to the kind lady here, to-morrow, and asking her interest with the charitable proprietor of this farm. But," added he, in order to turn the conversation, and put an end to Hoppy's mischievous remarks, "speaking about the proprietor of this farm, did you not, my kind friend, promise that you would describe to me the peculiarities of its arrangements?"

"Yes, I did," said Father Chatelain, "and I will be as good as my word. Our master, after having thus made up his mind to what he calls the *charity of labour*, said to himself: 'There are establishments and prizes for improving horses, cattle, sheep, ploughs, and many other things, and I cannot help thinking that it is high time to adopt some means to *improve men*. Good beasts are all very well, no doubt; good men would be still better, but are more difficult to produce. Sound grain, dry pasture, pure air and water, constant care and shelter, with these, horses and cattle will improve their condition to your heart's content; but to improve men—i'faith, that is quite another matter. You cannot fatten a man in good qualities as you can an ox in weight. The herbage benefits the beast, because savoury to his taste, it pleases while it fattens him—good! Now, my opinion is, that to make good precepts profitable to man, it is requisite that he should feel it to his *interest* to be guided by them.'"

"Just as the beast finds it to his interest to eat the best grass, Father Chatelain!" said several voices.

"Exactly so, my lads."

"But, Father Chatelain," said another labourer, "I have heard talk of a sort of farm where young thieves were kept, who, notwithstanding, conducted themselves well, were taught agriculture, and were taken care of like young princes."

"That is true, my good fellow, and a great deal of benefit there was in that institution. But though it is humane and charitable never to despair even of the wicked, at least we ought to give hope and encouragement to the good. Should a strong, honest, and industrious young man, ready and willing to work, present himself at this refuge-farm for young thieves, they would say to him: 'Well, youngster! have you ever robbed and vagabondized?' 'No.' 'Well then, we can't receive you here—we have no room for honest lads.'"

"Oh, what you say there is very true, Father Chatelain," said Jean René: "that is done for knaves which is not done for honest men; they improve the condition of beasts, but not of men."

"It was to set an example and show a remedy for that evil, my lad, as I am telling this poor man, that our master established this farm. 'I know very well,' said he, 'that *on high* there are rewards for honest men; but then that is so very far off, and there are some (they are to be pitied, my children) who have neither the strength of sight, nor the firmness of heart to see or to travel so long and thorny a road: besides, how are these poor, heart-sick, starved, toil-worn creatures to find leisure to look trustingly *on high?* During the live-long day, from sunrise to dark, they are bent down to the earth, they dig, sow, plant, weed, they reap for master; and at night, worn out, they snatch a short respite from care on their wretched straw. On Sundays they strive to forget their miseries in the drunkenness and debauchery of the pothouse! And it is thus that the wages of their sufferings are dissipated. After a hard day's work, continued even beyond their strength, is their bread less coarse, their bed less hard, their infant child less sickly, their wife less exhausted and attenuated by nourishing it? No, no, no! Did I say nourishing it—alas! She, perhaps, has not broken her own fast! I know that, though their bread is black and coarse, it still is bread; I know that their pallet is a wretched one, but it still is a bed; and though their children are hungry and ill-fed, at least

they live. Perhaps the unfortunates would even bear their miseries lightly, did no comparison present itself between their own condition and that of others; but they go to the city or town on the market-day, and see white bread, soft and warm beds and covering, children rosy and blooming as the flowers of May, and so abundantly, so over-abundantly provided for, that they throw their cakes to the very swans in the park. Oh! when these poor creatures return to their wretched mud-hovels, their black bread, and their miserable pallets, they say to themselves, as they look upon their pale, emaciated, and hungered children, to whom they would have been glad to carry even but a morsel of the cakes which they saw the little ones of the rich throw wantonly and wastefully to the swans: 'As there must be rich and poor, why were we not born rich? This is unjust to us. Why does not each have his turn in worldly prosperity?' Now, no doubt these words are both sinful and unreasonable, and it is equally true that they in nowise lighten their burthens; yet this heavy load which so oppresses and crushes, and wounds them, must be borne without relaxation, and even without hope that, at some future period of their lives, they will be relieved from it, without the hope of tasting for one day, but one single day, the happiness that springs from ease. Their *whole life* to pass thus! Indeed, *that* seems a weary while—as long as a whole day of rain, without one momentary ray of sunshine. Then they return to their hard and ill-paid toil with disgust and loathing, and most of them say to themselves: 'What matters it to us whether we work well or ill, more or less? whether the ears of corn be heavy or light?—we shall not profit by it. Why should we do more than we are forced to do, or trouble our heads with matters that only concern our master's interest?—it is enough that we keep ourselves honest. Crime is punished—we will not do evil; but well-doing is without reward, therefore why strive to do well?' This mode of arguing is unwholesome; the distance is but short from such thoughts to idleness, and from idleness to vice the distance is still shorter. Unfortunately, those who are neither positively virtuous nor absolutely vicious, who do neither good nor evil, form the large majority of this class. These are the very people,' said our master, 'we ought to try to improve, no less than if they had the honour of being horses, or the advantage of being born with wool or hide on their backs. Let us make it the interest of the poor to be active, prudent, laborious, well instructed, and devoted to their duties; let us prove to them that even in a physical point of view they will be happier—every one will gain by our doing so, the rich as well as the poor, the employer as well as the employed. In order to render good advice really useful to the poor, let us give them here below some slight foretaste of the happiness which awaits the just on high. Having well considered and matured his plan, our master made it known in the district that he wanted six men and as many women and girls, as farm servants; but that he wished to select them from among the best characters in the neighbourhood, such characters to be strictly certified by the magistrates or clergymen, or other worthy men. He proposed to give princely pay, board equal to that of the citizens, and to divide among all the labourers a tenth of the produce of the crops; they were to remain at the farm for two years, and then to make room for others, chosen in the same way; but, at the expiration of five years, the former labourers might again present themselves as candidates for admission, if there were any vacancies. Thus, from the first foundation of the farm upon this footing, all the labourers in the neighbourhood have said to themselves: 'Let us be active, honest, and industrious: let us become conspicuous for good conduct, and some day we may obtain places at the farm of Bouqueval. There we shall live in perfect happiness for two years; we shall complete ourselves in every branch of our calling; we shall put by a good sum of money, and, beyond all that, when it comes to our turn to leave Bouqueval, every one will be anxious to hire us, because they know that, to be admitted in that establishment, we must have had the best of characters."

"I'm engaged beforehand, by M. Debreuil, to go to the farm of Arnouville," said Jean René.

"And I am engaged for Gonesse," said another labourer.

"You see, my good friend, every one gains by this plan—the farmers of the neighbourhood in particular. There are only a dozen places here for men and women, it is true, but the hope of getting them forms perhaps fifty or threescore good and skilful characters in the district; and they who do not get the places will still remain good and skilful, will they not? Of course. They say to themselves, the good things there will keep, and if we have not succeeded this time, let us hope for the next, and thus the number of good labourers increases. And is it not so in other things? for one horse or one ox that gains the prize for swiftness, size, or beauty, at least a hundred are rendered fit to contend for that prize. Well, do not those which do *not* gain the prize, still retain the superior qualities which their owners gave to them, in the hope that they would do so? And now, friend, was I not right, when I told you that our farm is not a common farm, and that our master is no ordinary master?"

"Oh, indeed, there can be no doubt of that!" cried the Schoolmaster; "and the more I hear of his wisdom and generosity, the more am I led to hope he will be induced to pity my sad fate. A man who does good, at once so generously and so wisely, will scarcely

think much of one good action the more. But pray let me at least know his name, and also that of your mistress," added the Schoolmaster, in a cheerful voice, that I may beforehand bless those noble creatures; for I am certain that your good master and mistress will have pity on me."

"I'd lay anything, now, that you expect to hear some names that have made a vast noise in the world! but no, those names are sweet and simple as those of saints. 'Our Lady of Ready Help' is Mrs. George, and our excellent master is called plain M. Rudolph."

"My wife—my executioner!" muttered the wretch, thunderstruck; "Rudolph! Mrs. George!"

The Schoolmaster could not even flatter himself for an instant that he was misled by an accidental similarity of names; for previous to condemning him to his fearful punishment, Rudolph had told him how strong an interest he took in Mrs. George. Moreover, the recent presence of the negro doctor at this farm was of itself conclusive proof to the ruffian that he did not labour under any mistake in the matter. He feared something fatal and retributive from this last coincidence, which suddenly and so completely overturned all the hopes he had based upon the generosity of the master of the farm of Bouqueval. His first impulse was to fly. The name of Rudolph inspired him with invincible terror—perhaps at this very moment he might be at the farm! Scarcely had the ruffian recovered from the first shock of surprise, ere he arose, seized Hoppy's hand, and distractedly cried: "Let us go away!—lead me out!—let us begone from this place!"

The labourers stared at him with astonishment.

"Go, my poor man? You surely cannot think of such a thing!" said Father Chatelain. "What gadfly has bitten you now? Are you crazy?"

Hoppy adroitly availed himself of this last suggestion, heaved a long sigh, and shook his head affirmatively; then, putting his hand to his forehead, he gave the labourers to understand that the brain of his pretended father was by no means sound. The old labourer responded by a nod of intelligence and compassion.

"Come, come, let us begone—let us begone!" repeated the Schoolmaster, endeavouring to drag the boy along with him. Hoppy, doggedly determined not to quit so satisfactory a berth for the frost and snow of the fields, said, in a doleful voice: "Oh dear, oh dear, my poor father! your fit is coming on again. Do not think of going out this dreadful cold night; it will do you harm, perhaps be the death of you! Oh, I prefer even the pain of being disobedient to you, to leading you out at such an hour, on such a cold night!" Then addressing himself to the labourers, he added: "Will none of you, kind gentlemen, help to prevent my poor father from going out to-night?"

"Oh, yes, make yourself easy about that, my boy," said Father Chatelain; "we will not open the door for your father. He will be kindly forced to stay here to-night, in spite of himself."

"You shall not force me to remain here!" cried the Schoolmaster. "Besides, I should only be troublesome to your master, M. Rudolph. You told me the farm was not a hospital; once more, then, I say, let me go my way!"

"Trouble our master? Be in no fear about that. Unfortunately for us, he does not live here; neither do we see him half as often as we should like. But even if he were here, your presence would make no difference to him."

"Oh no, no," persisted the blind man, with increased alarm; "I have changed my mind about applying to him. My son was quite right; my relation at Louvres will certainly have pity on me. I will go and seek her at once."

"All that I have to say," replied Father Chatelain, good-naturedly, for he was now quite convinced that he had to do with a man whose brain was slightly affected, "is merely this—that to attempt to proceed on your journey with your child to-night is out of the question: we will arrange about the rest."

Although Rudolph was not at Bouqueval, the terrors of the Schoolmaster were not altogether calmed. Frightfully as he was disfigured, he still feared lest he should be recognised by his wife, who at any moment might descend into the kitchen; in that case he felt persuaded that she would denounce him, and give him into custody; for he had all along been of opinion that Rudolph, in the infliction of his horrible punishment, had done it to gratify the hatred and vengeance of Mrs. George. But the helpless ruffian, unable to quit the farm, was now completely at Hoppy's mercy. Resigning himself, therefore, to necessity, but anxious to avoid being surprised by his wife, he said to the husbandman: "Since you assure me that my staying here will not be troublesome to your master or mistress, I accept the hospitality that you are so kind as to offer me; but, as I am much fatigued, I will go to bed, if you will permit me, as I wish to set out at daybreak in the morning."

"Oh, any time you please in the morning—we are early birds here; and for fear you should again miss your way, some one shall set you a short distance on your road."

"If you have no objection," said Jean René, "I can take the good man a lift on his road, for Mrs. George has ordered me to take the light cart, to bring a sum of money from the notary at Villiers-le-Bel."

"You may help this poor man some distance on his road, but you must do so on foot," replied Father Chatelain; "for madame has changed her mind about the money, and has very rightly reflected that it is not worth while

to have so large a sum at the farm before it is wanted. Next Monday will be quite soon enough to go to Villiers-le-Bel; till then the money is as well with the notary as it would be here."

"Madame knows better than I do what is best; but yet, what is there to fear for the safety of the money here, Father Chatelain?"

"Nothing, my lad, God be praised, nothing! Nevertheless, I can assure you, that I would rather have five hundred sacks of corn here than ten bags of crowns. But come," continued Father Chatelain, addressing the ruffian and Hoppy, "Come, follow me, my friend—and you too, my little lad." Taking a small lamp, he led the two guests into a little room on the ground-floor, at the end of a long passage, into which several doors opened.

Placing the light upon the table, the husbandman said to the Schoolmaster:—

"Here is your lodging, and may heaven give you peaceful repose, my friend! As to you, my boy, at your age you are sure to sleep well."

The brigand, gloomy and pensive, sat down upon the edge of the bed, to which he was led by the imp. At the moment the old peasant was quitting the room, Hoppy made him a sign that he had something to say to him in private, and quickly rejoined him in the passage.

"What do you want to say to me, my little fellow?" asked the good-natured Chatelain.

"Oh! my kind gentleman, I am much to be pitied. I only wanted to say that my poor father is sometimes seized with fits in the night—they're convulsion fits. I'm not strong enough to hold him by myself, and if I should want help, is there anybody near who could hear me?"

"Poor little fellow," said the peasant, sympathizingly, "don't be alarmed. You see the door there, by the side of the staircase?"

"Yes, kind sir, I see it."

"Well, then, one of our farm-boys always sleeps in that room; so if you want aid, you have only to go there and arouse him—the key is outside his door—and he will be with your father in an instant."

"Alas! sir, the boy and I together couldn't manage my poor father, if his convulsions come on strong; perhaps you also would be kind enough to come—you do seem so kind, so very kind!"

"Me, my poor boy? I sleep, as well as all the other men-servants of the farm, in a building at the lower end of the farm-yard. But don't be alarmed: Jean René is strong enough to hold a bull by the horns. But if you and he should need any one to help you, he will call up our old cook; she sleeps on the first floor, in the room next to that of our mistress and of mademoiselle—and the old woman will, if there is need, serve as a nurse."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, my worthy gentleman. I will pray for you to-night, for you are very charitable to have so much pity for my poor father."

"Good night, my boy, and let us hope that you will not need any help to hold your father. You had better now make haste back; he may be wanting you."

"I will run to him; good night, kind gentleman."

"Heaven preserve you, poor boy!" And the pious old peasant returned to the kitchen. Scarcely had he turned his back, when the little deformed wretch made that eminently derisive and insulting gesture familiar to Parisian scamps; a gesture performed by repeatedly striking the nape of the neck with the open palm of the left hand, and each time throwing forward the right hand with the fingers and thumb extended. With a diabolical cunning, this dangerous boy had obtained, under the guise of tenderness and solicitude for his father, information most important to the success of the abominable projects of the Screech-Owl and the Schoolmaster. He already knew that the building in which he and the Schoolmaster were lodged was inhabited only by Mrs. George, Fleur-de-Marie, an old female cook, and one of the farm-lads. When Hoppy returned to the room assigned to him and the Schoolmaster, he took good care not to approach too near him. The latter heard him, and growled out:

"Where have you been, you little blackguard?"

"You are mighty curious, old 'No-eyes.'"

"Oh! you shall pay dear for all you have made me suffer this evening, you imp of mischief!" cried the Schoolmaster, rising in a fury, and groping about in search of Hoppy, supporting himself by the walls. "Now I will strangle you in right earnest—you infernal viper!"

"Poor dear father! is he so full of fun, then, that he must have a game at blindman's-buff with his own darling boy?" said Hoppy, chuckling and escaping with the greatest ease from the pursuit of the Schoolmaster. The latter, first impelled to the attempt by irrepressible rage, was soon induced to give it up, and, as had been the case before, to relinquish the hope of wreaking his vengeance on Red Arm's son. Compelled to endure his insolent persecution until the time when he could securely avenge himself, the ruffian, swallowing his powerless passion, threw himself upon the bed, uttering awful blasphemies.

"Poor father! is your tooth-ache so *very* bad, that you rip out so many jaw-breakers? What would the pet parson say if he heard you? Wouldn't he order you a swingeing penance!"

"Well, well, go on!" said the robber, after a long pause, in a hollow and constrained voice. "Sneer at me; take advantage of my misery—coward that you are! That is grand, noble, generous!"

"Oh! this bangs Banagher! Generous! How prime we patter now!" screamed Hoppy, bursting into a laugh. "Excuse me, after

that, I shall suppose you always put on gloves to pick pockets right and left, as you did before you had both your lamps poked out."

"But I never harmed you? Why then do you torment me thus?"

"First because you insulted my dear Owley, and then because you wanted to stay here and play the fool among these innocent clod-hoppers. Perhaps my noble captain would like to try a course of pigeon's milk?"

"Miserable young wretch! if it had been possible for me to remain at this farm—which may thunder and lightning shatter—you would have prevented me by your devilish tricks!"

"You stop here! here's a *drum* to *stall* to! Who would then be Screechy's *beast of suffering?* I, perhaps. Much obliged, but I don't want the situation."

"Villanous abortion!"

"Abortion! yes, that is another reason why I agree with *Aunt* Owl, that there's nothing more amusing than to tease you to death—you who could kill me with a blow of your fist; it's far more diverting than if you were weak—like myself! Oh, you were delightfully funny at supper to-night! Heavens above! what a lark I had all to myself! it was better than a front gallery seat at the Gaité! At every kick I gave you on the sly, rage drove the blood up into your head, and your white eyes became rimmed with fiery red; they only wanted a little dab of blue in the middle, and then they would have been tricolours—two slap-up cockades for a lobster's hat—ha! ha!"

"Come, come, you love to laugh and be merry—bah!—it suits your age. I'm not angry with you," said the Schoolmaster, in a tone of assumed carelessness, hoping to charm the viper, "but, instead of passing your jokes off upon me, it would be better if you would remember what you were told to do by the Owl, of whom you are so fond. You are to examine all the ways of the place, you know, and take impressions of the locks. Did you not hear what was said? they talked of a large sum of money to be here next Monday? We will come back with some friends, and make a fine haul. I was a fool indeed to think of remaining here; I should have had enough in a week of living among these wooden-headed churleys, shouldn't I, boy?" said the ruffian, thinking to flatter Hoppy.

"Your staying here would have distressed me excessively, upon my word of honour!" said Red Arm's son, with a chuckle.

"Yes, yes, there is a good hit to be made here; and even if there were no booty to be got in this house, I would return with the Screech-Owl to revenge myself," said the ruffian, in a voice trembling with rage and hatred; "for it is quite certain that it was my wife who excited that infernal Rudolph against me; and in blinding me, did he not say that he would put me at the mercy of every one, even of the weakest—of an old woman like the Screech-Owl, and a young child like you? Well, if I cannot revenge myself upon him, I will revenge myself on my wife! Yes, she shall pay for all—even though I have to fire the house, and bury myself among its burning ruins! Oh! I will have—I will——"

"Don't you wish you may get hold of your wife, eh, old fellow? Only think! she's within ten skips of you; that's vexatious, isn't it? If I liked, I could lead you to the door of her room—that I could, for I know her chamber. I know it—I know it—I know it," added Hoppy, singing in his droning style.

"You know her room!" cried the Schoolmaster, with a ferocious joy. "You know it!"

"Oh! you are coming round now!" said Hoppy; "you'll be 'good dog' presently: come, beg pretty, on your hind legs, like another dog, when you show him a bone! Come, stand up, old Towser!"

"You know which is my wife's room?" repeated the ruffian, and turning in the direction of the urchin's voice.

"Raythe r! and the most famous part of the business is, that in this whole building there is only one farm-lad. I know his door—the key is in the lock outside; one turn, and click! he is a close prisoner. Sit up, then, old Towser!"

"Who told you this?" cried the ruffian, springing up involuntarily.

"Capital! there's a good pup! In the room beside your wife's sleeps an old cook; another turn of the key, and we are masters of this house, of your wife, and of the young girl in the grey cloak, that we came to carry off. Now, give us your paw, old Towser: play, good dog, and sit up for your master. Sit up, sir—directly!"

"You lie, you lie! how could you know all this?"

"I'm lame, but I'm game. Just now, I made up a tale about your having fits, and told it to that snow-headed chawbacon; I asked him, too, where I should go for help, should I need it. Then he told me that, if you had an attack, I could go and rouse up the boy and the old cook, and he showed me where they sleep—one on this floor, and the other on the first floor, in the next room to your wife—your wife—your wife—your wife!" sung Hoppy, in his monotonous drone. After a long silence, the Schoolmaster said, in a calm tone, and with frightful determination—

"Listen to me, boy; I have had quite enough of life. Just now—yes, I confess it—I had a gleam of hope that makes my actual fate the more terrible. The prison, the galleys, the guillotine, are nothing compared to what I have endured since morning—and this I have to endure *for ever*. Lead me to my wife's room. I have my knife with me; I will kill her. I shall afterwards be killed; but that be hanged! I shall be revenged, and that will comfort me. What I endure is too much;

oh! it is too much for me, before whom all once trembled! Oh! did you but know what I suffer, you would pity me. Even now my skull is bursting; my veins are swelling and about to break—my brain swims—I——"

"I see—a cold in your head, old gentleman. Heerd of that afore. Sneeze! sneeze a little, it will relieve you wonderfully," said Hoppy, laughing derisively. "What say you to a pinch of snuff?" And striking noisily upon the back of his closed left hand, as if tapping the lid of a snuff-box, he sang—

"J'ai du bon tabac dans ma tabatière,
J'ai du bon tabac, tu n'en auras pas."

"Oh, my God! my God! they want to drive me mad!" cried the ruffian, who, in reality, was now well nigh maddened by his excessive thirst of vengeance, which he vainly sought to satiate. The plenitude of the monster's strength was only equalled by its impotency. Imagine some famished wolf, tortured all day by a child through the iron bars of his den, and having at two paces from him, yet fully protected against his power, a victim which would at once satisfy his hunger and his rage. At the imp's last taunt, the murderer almost entirely lost his senses. Unable to procure another victim, he wished, in his frenzy, to shed his own blood—blood only was his desire. For an instant, he was fully resolved to slay himself; had he had a loaded pistol in his hand, he would not have hesitated to do so. He felt in his pocket, and drew forth a formidable dagger-knife, opened it, and raised it to stab himself. But rapid as his movements were, they were outstripped by his reflections, by fear, and by the instinctive clinging to life. The murderer's courage failed him, and his hand fell upon his knees. Hoppy had followed all these gestures with an attentive eye, and when he saw the harmless ending of such tragic preparations, he cried out with a chuckle, "Halloo, waiter—here's a duel—don't call for the police!"

The Schoolmaster, fearing lest he should lose his reason in a final and useless burst of rage, turned a deaf ear to this last insult of Hoppy, who so impertinently commented on the cowardice with which the assassin shrank from suicide. Despairing of escaping from what, with a sort of avenging fatality, he called the *cruelty* of this accursed boy, the ruffian resolved to make a last attempt by appealing to the cupidity of the lad.

"Oh!" said he to him, in an almost supplicating voice, "lead me to the door of my wife's room; you shall take whatever you like from that room, and then escape—you shall leave me there alone; if you like, you can cry murder, and alarm the house. Let them arrest me, or kill me on the spot—I shall die avenged at least, since I have not the courage to finish. Oh! lead me, lead me! you will find plenty of gold and jewels there; I tell you again, that you shall have all you like to take, for yourself alone, do you hear?—for yourself alone!—only lead me to where she is."

"Oh, yes, I hear you very well. You want me to lead you to her door, then to her bed, and then tell you where to strike, and then guide your hand—isn't that it? You want me to be your *knife-handle*, you old monster!" replied Hoppy, with an expression of contempt, horror, and anger, which, for the first time that day, gave something of seriousness to his weasel countenance, usually so unabashed and derisive.

"You refuse?"

Red Arm's son made no reply. With bared feet he stealthily and silently crept towards the Schoolmaster, who, seated on the edge of the bed, still held his long knife in his hand. With marvellous quickness and dexterity, Hoppy snatched the weapon away, and, at a single bound, placed himself at the other end of the room.

"My knife! my knife!" cried the ruffian, siretching out his arms.

"No! for you are just the sort to ask to see your wife in the morning, and then stab her—since you say you are tired of life, and are too great a coward to kill yourself."

"How he defends my wife against me!" exclaimed the bandit, whose intellect was becoming less and less clear every instant. "This little monster must be a devil! Where am I? Why should he try to save her?"

"Just to handicap you!" said Hoppy, whose countenance resumed its old mask of impudent raillery.

"Oh, is that it?" murmured the Schoolmaster, completely bewildered. "Well, then, I'll fire the house! we will burn all together—all! I prefer this furnace to *the other*. The candle! the candle!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" screamed Hoppy, bursting into a fresh fit of laughter. "If they hadn't blown out your candles, and for ever, you would see that ours has been out this hour past!" And the little imp sung nasally:—

"My light has gone out
I haven't a spark."

The Schoolmaster heaved a deep groan, extended his arms, and fell heavily on the floor, face downwards; as if struck by apoplexy, he remained motionless.

"An old game, my veteran!" said Hoppy; "a nice trick to get me into your clutches! When you're tired of playin' possum, let's know, and I will give you leave to get up again!"

Fearful of being surprised by the Schoolmaster, Red Arm's son determined not to sleep, and sat still in his chair, with his eyes fixed upon the prostrate ruffian, whose fall, he was convinced, was only a trick, and by no means supposing him in any danger. To pass his time the more agreeably, he slily drew a little red silk purse from his pocket, and counted slowly, with looks of covetous delight, the seventeen pieces of gold which it contained.

Hoppy had thus acquired his ill-gotten store: —It may be remembered that, when Lady d'Harville was so nearly surprised by the marquis, on the occasion of her unfortunate assignation with the Commander, Rudolph giving her a purse, had told her to go to the fifth story of the house, on the plea of befriending the Morels. Lady d'Harville rapidly ascended the stairs, holding the purse in her hand, when Hoppy, coming from the apartment of the charlatan, espied the purse, pretended to stumble, and at the moment of the collision slily snatched it from the lady's hand. Lady d'Harville, bewildered, almost maddened with terror, hearing the footsteps of her husband, hastened up to the fifth story of the house without the power, even without the thought, of complaining of the little cripple's audacious robbery. After having counted and recounted his gold, Hoppy cast his eyes towards the Schoolmaster, still stretched upon the floor. Uneasy for a moment, he listened attentively, and hearing the robber breathe freely and regularly, he thought that he was merely prolonging his meditated scheme to catch him.

An accident had saved the life of the Schoolmaster from a congestion of the brain, which doubtless would have proved fatal. His fall had occasioned a copious bleeding from the nose. He had now fallen into a sort of feverish trance—half slumber; half delirium; and while he lay in that state, he had this wild, this fearful dream.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE DREAM.

THE Schoolmaster's dream was this:—He again sees Rudolph in the house in the Allée des Veuves. Nothing is changed in that saloon in which the ruffian underwent his dreadful punishment. Rudolph is seated behind the table, whereon lie the papers of the Schoolmaster, and the small dove of lapis lazuli, which he had given to the Screech-Owl. The countenance of Rudolph is grave and sad. On his right stands the negro David, silent and impassible; on his left the Slasher, gazing with a terrified aspect on the solemn scene. The Schoolmaster, in this hideous dream, is no longer blind, he sees through the medium of limpid blood, which fills the cavities of his eyes: all objects present themselves of a blood-red hue. As birds of prey hang motionless in the upper air above their victims, whom they fascinate before they devour, so a monstrous Owl, whose head presents the hideous aspect of the one-eyed woman, hovers above the Schoolmaster, and mocks his every gesture, fixing on him incessantly one round, green, glaring eye.

This continued gaze presses upon the bosom of the ruffian with suffocating weight.

As one who has become accustomed to darkness gradually distinguishes objects which at first were invisible, the Schoolmaster now discovers an enormous lake of blood, which separates him from the table at which Rudolph is seated. But soon his inflexible judge, as well as the Slasher and the negro doctor, gradually assume colossal proportions; these three phantoms rise to the very friezes of the ceiling, which becomes higher in proportion as they enlarge.

The lake of blood is smooth and unruffled as a crimson mirror; in it the Schoolmaster sees reflected his own hideous countenance. But soon this reflection is effaced by the tumult of the boiling waves. From their agitated surface rises, like the fetid exhalation of a swamp, a livid vapour of that violet colour peculiar to the lips of corpses. But even as this vapour rises—rises—rises—so do the faces of Rudolph, the Slasher, and the negro continue to increase, and still overpeer this awful cloud. Amid the wreaths of this vapour, the Schoolmaster beholds the pale spectres of his victims, and the murderous deeds of which he was the guiding spirit.

First, in this fantastic mirage, the Schoolmaster beholds a little bald old man, dressed in a brown frock coat, his eyes concealed by a green silk shade. He is busied, in a mean, dilapidated room, counting piles of gold coin by the light of a lamp. Through the window, lighted by a pale moon, which silvers the crests of some lofty trees sighing and waving in the night-breeze, the Schoolmaster sees himself on the outside of the casement—his horrible countenance flattened against the glass, and eagerly watching, with glaring eyes, every movement of the little old man. Anon he breaks a pane of glass, opens the casement, springs at a single bound upon his victim, and buries his long, sharp knife between his shoulders. The movement was so rapid, the blow so quick, so sure, that the dead body remains seated on the chair!

The murderer tries to withdraw his weapon from the corpse—he cannot! He redoubles his efforts—they are vain! Then would he fain abandon his knife—impossible! The hand of the assassin adheres to the handle of the knife, as its blade to the body of the victim! The murderer hears the clanking of spurs and rattling of sabres on the pavement of a neighbouring court-yard. To escape, come what may, he endeavours to carry with him the withered corpse of the old man, from which he could withdraw neither knife nor hand. But even in this he cannot succeed. That light, frail carcass weighs him down like a mass of lead. Despite his Herculean breadth of shoulders, despite the desperation of his efforts, the Schoolmaster cannot even lift the enormous weight.

The noise of measured footsteps, and the clank of trailing sabres, come nearer and nearer. The key turns in the lock—the door opens. . . . The vision disappears.

Then the Owl claps its wings, shrieking:—

"THAT IS THE RICH OLD MAN OF THE RUE DU ROULE—YOUR FLESHING OF YOUR ASSASSIN'S MAIDEN BLADE!—ASSASSIN!—ASSASSIN!"

A moment obscured, the vapour which covered the lake of blood resumes its transparency, and there looms up another spectre.

Day seems just dawning through a dark and heavy fog. A man, in the attire of a cattle-dealer, lies dead upon a bank of the high road. The trampled ground, the dented and up-torn grass, show that the victim has made a desperate resistance. That man has five bleeding wounds on his chest. He is lifeless, but ceases not to whistle for his dogs, he still calls them to him, crying—"Help, help!" But he whistles for his dogs, and calls for aid, through those five wide, deep, and ghastly wounds, the gaping edges of which move like speaking lips! These five cries, these five whistles, simultaneously issuing from the corpse, by the *mouths* of his death-wounds, are fearful to hear.

At this moment, the Owl again flaps her heavy wings, and mocks the five funereal groans of the victim, by as many bursts of screaming laughter, ferocious and strange as the laugh of the frantic; then the Owl cries:—

"THE CATTLE-DEALER OF POISSY!—ASSASSIN!—ASSASSIN!—ASSASSIN!"

Prolonged subterranean echoes at first repeat aloud the malevolent laughter of the Owl! then seem gradually to sink and die away in the bowels of the earth.

At this noise, two large dogs, black as ebony, with eyes glaring like burning coals, begin to run rapidly round—around—around the Schoolmaster, barking furiously. They almost touch him, yet their bark seems as distant as though borne on the morning breeze.

By degrees, the spectres fade away like dispersing mists, and become lost in the livid vapour which continually ascends.

A new exhalation spreads itself on the surface of the lake of blood, and rests there. It is a transparent, greenish mist, and resembles the vertical section of a canal filled with water. At first, the bed of the canal seems to be covered with a thick slime, composed of innumerable reptiles, usually invisible to the eye, but which now, magnified as if viewed through a microscope, take the most monstrous aspects, the most enormous dimensions relatively to their actual size. It is no longer mud, but a compact, busy, grovelling, twining mass of unclean and disgusting creatures—a vast, struggling, and inextricable living entanglement, which swarms and multiplies in such compact and serried pressure, that scarcely did an imperceptible undulation stir the level of this filth, or rather this bank of foul animalculæ. Above floats, slowly and sluggishly, a thick, dead, muddy water, which carries along in its lazy course all the filth vomited by the drains and sewers of a great city, among which roll the remains of numerous dead animals. Of a sudden, the Schoolmaster hears the sound of a body falling heavily into this turbid and loathsome stream. In its sudden reflux, the water splashes in his face. Through a crowd of air-bubbles which rise to the surface of the canal, he sees the body of a woman, sinking rapidly as she struggles—struggles. Then he sees himself and the Owl precipitately rushing from the bank of the canal Saint Martin, carrying with them a box enveloped in a black cloth. Yet he still witnesses all the varying agonies of the victim whom he and the Owl had thrown into the canal. After this first immersion, the woman rises to the surface of the water, and violently throws about her arms, like one who, not knowing how to swim, vainly strives to save herself. Then he hears a great shriek—a long, loud, piercing shriek, like one in the last extremity—which ends in the heavy and gurgling sounds of drowning, and, for the second time, that woman sinks beneath the unclean water.

The Owl, still brooding motionless over the dread scene, now mocks the convulsive and hoarse gurgling of the drowning woman, as it had imitated the groans of the cattle-dealer. In the midst of bursts of harrowing laughter, the Owl repeats, "To-whit, to-whoo!"

Subterranean echoes give back these sounds.

Submerged a second time, the drowning woman, in the agony of suffocation, makes an involuntary attempt to breathe; but, instead of air, it is water she inhales. Then her head falls back, her convulsed features become swollen and livid, her neck blue and tumid, her arms stiffen, and, in a last terrible convulsion, the drowning victim moves her feet, which were resting on the slime. Then she is surrounded by a cloud of blackish mud, which rises with her to the surface of the water. Scarcely has the drowned woman exhaled her last gasp, ere she is covered with myriads upon myriads of microscopic reptiles—the voracious and horrible vermin of the slime. For an instant, the corpse floats and still sways about a little; then sinks slowly and horizontally, the feet lower than the head, and begins to be borne away by the sluggish under-current of the canal. From time to time, the corpse rolls over and over, and its face turns towards the Schoolmaster. Then the spectre gazes on him with its two large eyes fixed, glassy, and opaque—its blue lips move. The Schoolmaster is far away from the drowned victim, yet she murmurs in his ear her death-gasp, accompanying the appalling rattle with the singular noise which is made by a submerged bottle when filling itself with water.

The Owl repeats the "To-whoo!" claps her wings, and shrieks, "THE WOMAN OF THE CANAL SAINT MARTIN!—ASSASSIN!—ASSASSIN!—ASSASSIN!" The vision of the drowned woman disappears!

The lake of blood, across which the School-

master sees Rudolph ever, becomes of a bronzed black; then it reddens, and speedily changes into a liquid furnace of molten metal. Then this burning lake rises—rises—rises towards the sky, like an immense waterspout! And now it is a fiery sky, like iron at a white heat. This boundless horizon dazzles and scorches the eyes of the Schoolmaster, who, riveted to the spot, can neither move away nor withdraw his gaze. Then, in the depths of this molten lava, the fierce reflection of which seems to consume him, he sees, slowly passing and repassing, the black and gigantic spectres of his victims.

"THE MAGIC-LANTERN OF REMORSE!—REMORSE!—REMORSE!" shrieks the Owl, flapping its hideous wings, and uttering shouts of mocking laughter.

Notwithstanding the intolerable anguish caused to him by that incessant contemplation, the Schoolmaster was still unable to withdraw his gaze from the spectres that moved slowly across that dazzling sheet of lurid flame. Then a horrible sensation stole over him. Passing through all the degrees of a nameless torture, by dint of gazing upon that burning and blasting mass of fiery vapour, he felt his eyeballs and pupils—which had replaced the blood which filled his eye-sockets at the beginning of his dream—become hot, burning, melting, boiling beneath the intensity of that glowing furnace, and at last calcine in their cavities, as though in crucibles of red-hot iron. By a frightful faculty, after having *seen* as well as felt the successive transformation of his eyeballs into calcined ashes, he falls into the shadows and dense darkness of his actual blindness.

But now, suddenly, his intolerable agonies are assuaged as if by enchantment. An aromatic air, of the most delicious coolness, passes over the yet burning sockets of his eyes. This air is a soft and soothing commingling of the spring odours that are exhaled from the wild flowers of the fields and hedgerows bathed in dew. The Schoolmaster hears around him a gentle sound, like that of the light breeze playing among the foliage, or of a spring of living water softly murmuring over its bed of mossy stones. Thousands of birds warble from time to time the most melodious strains. When they cease, infantine voices of an angelic purity sing strange and unknown *winged* words, which the Schoolmaster hears ascending to the skies, as with gentle flutterings. A feeling of moral health, of a softness and repose utterly undefinable, gradually seizes upon him. It is an expansion of the heart, a rapture of the mind, a radiancy of the soul, of which the most intense and intoxicating physical feeling can impart no idea. He feels himself gently floating in an ethereal sphere; he seems raised to an immeasurable height—

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After a few moments' experience of this ineffable happiness, again he is plunged into the dark abyss of his accustomed thoughts. Still he dreams: but now he is the gagged and fast-bound miscreant—blaspheming and cursing himself in the bursts of impotent fury. A solemn and sonorous voice echoes in the awful silence: it is Rudolph's voice. The Schoolmaster shudders with terror: he has a vague consciousness that it is but a dream; but so formidable is the terror with which Rudolph inspires him, that he makes ineffectual efforts to rouse himself, and escape from this new spectre. The voice speaks, and the guilty wretch perforce listens.

The speech of Rudolph is not angry; but full of sadness and compassion. "Poor wretch," saith he to the Schoolmaster, "the hour of your repentance has not yet come: God alone knows when it will. The punishment of your crimes is as yet incomplete. You have suffered, but you have not expiated, and fate still pursues the high task of destined retribution. Your accomplices have become your tormentors; a woman and a child master you—torture you. In taking upon you a terrible chastisement, I said to you—remember my words: '*you have criminally abused your gift of strength; I will paralyse that strength. The strongest, the fiercest, have trembled before you; you shall tremble before the weakest.*' You have quitted the obscure retreat in which you might have lived to repentance and to expiation. You were afraid of solitude and of silence. You have sought to drown remembrance by new crimes. 'Tis but now that in a frightful and sanguinary delirium you wished to kill your wife; she is here, beneath the same roof with you; she sleeps without defence; you have your knife, and her chamber is within a few paces of you; nought prevents you from reaching her; nothing can save her from your fury—nothing—but that you are powerless! The dream you had—that you even now have—in which you are still bound, may be to you a merciful admonition—may yet save you. The mysterious images of this vision have a deep, a mystic significance. The lake of blood in which your victim appeared to you, is the blood which you have shed; the lava which replaced it is the devouring remorse which ought to consume you, in order that God, at length, pitying your protracted tortures, may call you to him, and grant you to taste the ineffable delights of mercy. But this will not be. No, no!—these warnings will be useless. Far from repenting of the past, your daily regret, expressed in horrible blasphemies, will be lavished upon the time when you committed your horrible crimes. Alas! from this continual struggle between your sanguinary desires and the impossibility of gratifying them, between your habits of oppression and the necessity of submitting yourself to beings as weak as they are cruel, there will result to you a fate so frightful, so horrible. . . . . Oh! unhappy wretch!"

The voice of Rudolph trembled, and for a moment ceased, as though emotion and sorrow had stifled it. The Schoolmaster felt his skin creep upon his brow. What could be this fate, so horrible, that it excited even the commiseration of his executioner?

"The fate which awaits you is so awful," resumed Rudolph, "that if God, in His inexorable and all-powerful vengeance, willed that you should, in your own person, expiate the crimes of all men, He would devise no more frightful punishment. Woe! woe! woe unto you!"

At this moment the Schoolmaster gave a piercing shriek, and awoke with a start from this dreadful dream.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE LETTER.

NINE sounded from the clock of the farm of Bouqueval, when Mrs. George softly entered the chamber of Fleur-de-Marie. The sleep of the young girl was so light, that she almost instantaneously awoke. A bright winter sun darted its rays through the blinds and chintz window-curtains, the pink linings of which cast on the pale, mild countenance of Goualeuse the hue which alone was wanting to perfect beauty.

"Well, my child," said Mrs. George, seating herself on the bed, and kissing her forehead, "how do you feel yourself this morning?"

"Better, much better, madame, I thank you."

"Were you not awakened very early?"

"No, madame."

"I am glad of that. The unfortunate blind man and his son, to whom we gave a bed here last night, wished to leave the farm at daybreak; and I feared the noise made in opening the doors might have awakened you."

"Poor creatures! why did they go away so early?"

"I do not know: yesterday evening when I left you somewhat composed, I went down into the kitchen to see them; but they were both so much tired that they had asked permission to go to bed. Father Chatelain told me that the old blind man seems not quite right in his head, and all our people were touched and delighted with the tender attentions paid by his son to the unfortunate man. But hear me, Marie: you have had a slight attack of fever, and I therefore wish that you would not expose yourself to the cold; you shall not leave the parlour."

"Pardon me, madame, but I promised this evening, at five o'clock, to wait on M. le Curé at the parsonage."

"It will be imprudent; I am quite sure that you have passed a bad night—your eyes are heavy, and you have the look of one who has had broken rest."

"You are right, my dear madame, I have again had frightful dreams. In my sleep, I saw the woman who persecuted me when a child, and awoke with a start of terror. It is a ridiculous weakness, of which I am ashamed."

"This weakness afflicts me, because it causes you suffering, my poor little girl," said Mrs. George, with affectionate solicitude, observing the eyes of Goualeuse filled with tears. Marie threw her arms round the neck of her adopted mother, and hid her face in her bosom.

"In the name of heaven, dearest Marie, what is it so affects you?—you alarm me."

"Forgive me, I beseech you, madame, but for the last few days my heart has felt crushed within me. In spite of every effort, tears force themselves to my eyes. Boding thoughts haunt me—dark presentiments of some unknown and impending evil—some dreadful calamity will surely befall me——"

"Marie, Marie, I must really give you a scolding, if you give way so to these brain-sick terrors——"

At this moment Claudine entered, after having knocked at the door.

"What do you want, Claudine?"

"Pierre, madame, has just arrived from Arnouville, in Mrs. Debreuil's cabriolet, and he has brought you this letter, which he says is of the utmost importance."

Mrs. George opened the letter, and read aloud, as follows:—

"'My dear Mrs. George,—You will greatly oblige me, and probably be able to release me from a serious embarrassment, if you will favour me with your company at the farm, without delay. Pierre will drive you over here, and return with you this afternoon. I really am so confused, that I hardly know what I am about. M. Debreuil is at Pontoise, about the sale of his wool, and I have therefore recourse to you and Marie in my perplexity. Clara sends her love to her 'dear sister,' and impatiently expects her. Endeavour to come to breakfast at eleven o'clock.

"'Your very sincere friend,

"'C. Debreuil.'"

"What can it be about?" said Mrs. George to Marie. "Fortunately, Mrs. Debreuil's letter does not seem to relate to anything very serious."

"Shall I accompany you, madame?" said Marie.

"Perhaps that will scarcely be prudent, for it is extremely cold. But, after all," continued Mrs. George, "it will divert you; and, if you wrap yourself up well, the little trip may be favourable to you."

"But, madame, M. le Curé will expect me at the parsonage at five o'clock this evening."

"Right; we will be back before five, I promise you."

"Oh, thank you, madame; I shall be delighted to see Miss Clara again."

"What, again!" said Miss George in a tone of gentle reproach. "*Miss* Clara? Does our friend, when she speaks to you, call you *Miss* Marie?"

"No, madame," replied Goualeuse, casting down her eyes; "but, then, I—I——"

"You!—you are a cruel child to study nothing but self-torments. Have you so soon forgotten my reproaches, just now, for the same fault. Come, dress yourself quickly, and very warmly. We have yet time to reach Arnouville before eleven o'clock."

Then, leaving the room with Claudine, Mrs. George said to her: "Let Pierre wait; we shall be ready in a few minutes."

Half an hour after this conversation, Mrs. George and Fleur-de-Marie stepped into one of those roomy cabriolets used by wealthy farmers in the neighbourhood of Paris; and soon after the carriage, drawn by a powerful horse, and driven by Pierre, rolled rapidly along the grassy road leading from Bouqueval to Arnouville. The extensive homestead and the numerous outbuildings of the farm cultivated by M. Debreuil, showed the importance of this magnificent property, which Mdlle. Césarine de Noirmont, had brought as a dowry on her marriage with the Duke de Lucenay.

The echoing cracks of Pierre's whip announced to Mrs. Debreuil the arrival of Mrs. George and Fleur-de-Marie, who, on alighting from the vehicle, were joyously received by Clara and her mother. Mrs. Debreuil was about fifty years of age, her physiognomy affable and mild; the features of her daughter—a pretty brunette, with blue eyes and fresh and rosy cheeks—breathed candour and kindness. To her great surprise, as Clara hastened to embrace her, Goualeuse perceived that her friend was dressed as a simple country maiden, instead of her former more fashionable attire."

"What, Clara! you also *disguised* as a peasant girl?" said Mrs. George, as she embraced her.

"Don't you know that she must be the same in everything as her sister Marie?" said Mrs. Debreuil; "she gave me no rest until she also had her cloth bodice and stuff petticoat, and all the rest, just like your Marie. But, my dear Mrs. George, we must not trouble ourselves about these caprices of our little girls," continued Mrs. Debreuil, with a deep sigh; "come with me, and let me tell you all my perplexities."

On reaching the parlour with her mother and Mrs. George, Clara seated herself next Fleur-de-Marie, giving her the best place by the fireside, paid her innumerable little marks of attention, pressed her hands within her own, to assure herself that they were no longer cold, kissed her again and again, and playfully called her a very naughty little sister indeed, for making such long intervals between her visits.

If the reader will call to mind the conversation that passed between poor Goualeuse and the Curé, he will easily imagine the mingled humility, pleasure, and fear, with which the unfortunate girl received these tender marks of affection.

"Well, now, my dear Mrs. Debreuil, what has happened to you?" said Mrs. George; "pray tell me how I can be of service."

"Oh, in many things; but I'll explain all to you. I do not think you are aware of it, but this farm is the private property of her Grace the Duchess of Lucenay; it is with her personally that we have to settle everything, without any reference to the duke's steward."

"Indeed; I was not aware of that."

"You'll see, presently, why I communicate this. The rent of the farm is, consequently, paid to the duchess herself, or to Madame Simon, her principal lady's-maid. Now, the duchess is so kind, so very kind, though she is rather hasty in temper, that it is quite a pleasure to have to do business with her. Debreuil and I would go through fire and water to oblige her; and no wonder either, for I knew her when she was quite a little girl, when she came here with her father, the late Prince de Noirment. Lately, she asked us for six months' rent in advance. Forty thousand francs is a sum not to be picked up in the street, as the saying is; but happily we had that amount in reserve, as the wedding portion of our Clara; and the very day after the request was made, the duchess had the money in bright shining louis. These great ladies want so many luxuries! However, it is only within the last year that the duchess has been strict in expecting her rents on the days they fall due: formerly she seemed never in want of money, but the times are much changed."

"As yet, my dear Mrs. Debreuil, I do not perceive how I can be of any service to you."

"I'm coming to that—I'm coming to that. I have told you all this, in order to enable you to understand what confidence the duchess places in us. To say nothing of her having been, at the age of twelve or thirteen, Clara's godmother—her noble father standing as the other sponsor; the duchess has since loaded her with kindnesses. Well, yesterday evening, I received, by express, this letter from the duchess:—

"'It is absolutely necessary, my dear Mrs. Debreuil, that the little lodge in the orchard be made fit for occupation by to-morrow evening.—Have all necessary furniture put into it, such as carpets, curtains, &c., &c. In a word, let nothing be wanting—but above all, make it as *comfortable* as possible.'

"Do you observe—*comfortable*, Mrs. George" and the word is underlined, too!" said Mrs.

Debreuil, looking at her friend with an air at once embarrassed and meditative. Then she continued:—

"'Have fires burning day and night in the lodge, to dispel any possible damp; for it is a long time since the rooms were inhabited. I wish you to treat that person who will occupy the lodge as you would treat *me*. You will receive by the hands of the new-comer a letter which will explain what I expect from your willing zeal. I reckon entirely on you, and feel assured that I may safely depend on your fidelity and desire to serve me. Adieu, my dear Mrs. Debreuil; kiss my pretty god-daughter for me, and believe me, with kindest feelings towards her and yourself,

"'NOIRMONT DE LUCENAY.

"'P.S.—The person in question will arrive the day after to-morrow, about dusk. Above all things, I beg of you, do not forget to make the lodge as *comfortable* as you possibly can.'

"*Comfortable* again, you see, and underlined as before!" said Mrs. Debreuil, as she returned the Duchess de Lucenay's letter to her pocket.

"Well, nothing can be more simple than that," replied Mrs. George.

"How, nothing more simple? Did you not hear, then? Her Grace the Duchess wishes the lodge to be rendered as *comfortable* as possible. It is on that account that I have begged you to come. Clara and I have well-nigh bothered ourselves out of our senses, endeavouring to make out what the word *comfortable* means, but we could not manage it. Yet Clara has been at boarding-school at Villiers-le-Bel, and brought away I don't know how many prizes for history and geography; well, for all that, she could make no more of the outlandish word than I could! I suppose it is some fine word among courtiers and fashionable people. So be it for me: but you must see how bothersome it is to me; her grace wishes above all things the lodge to be made *comfortable*—she underlines the word, she repeats it twice, and we don't even know what it means!"

"Heaven be praised!" said Mrs. George, smiling, "I can explain this great mystery. *Comfortable*, in the present instance, means a convenient, well-arranged, well-closed, well-warmed room; in a word, an apartment in which nothing needful is wanting, nor even a little of the superfluous."

"Oh, now I understand what the word means; but the explanation only increases my embarrassment."

"How is that?"

"The duchess speaks of carpets, furniture, and *et cetera*; but we have no carpets here, our furniture is of the most homely kind; and then, in fact, I don't know whether the person we have to expect is a gentleman or a lady, and everything must be prepared by to-morrow evening. What shall I do? How can I do it? there's nothing to be got here. Upon my word, Mrs. George, it's enough to turn one's brain!"

"But, mother," said Clara, "suppose you were to take the furniture out of my room; I could pass a few days at Bouqueval with Marie, until you could refurnish it!"

"Your room—your room, my child?" said Mrs. Debreuil, shrugging up her shoulders; "do you fancy the simple furniture of your room can come up to what madame the duchess means by the word *comfortable*? Dear, oh, dear! where can people find such queer words?"

"The lodge is commonly uninhabited, then, I presume?" asked Mrs. George.

"Oh, yes; it is that little white house which stands by itself at the bottom of the orchard. The late prince had it built for her grace when she was a girl; and when she came to the farm with her father she used to occupy it. It contains three pretty rooms, and at the end of its garden there is a Swiss dairy, where the duchess when a child used to drive herself by playing dairy-maid. Since her marriage, we have seen her at the farm only twice, and on each occasion she passed several hours in the little lodge. The first time—it is full six years ago—she came on horseback with——" Then, as though the presence of Clara and Fleur-de-Marie prevented her from saying more, she abruptly added: "But, here am I, talking and gossiping, that will never help me out of my difficulty. Pray assist me, my dear Mrs. George; help me, I beg of you!"

"Well, let us see. How is the lodge furnished at the present moment?"

"Scarcely at all. In the principal room there is straw matting on the floor, a rush couch, chairs and armchairs of the same material, and a table. That's all, and between that and being *comfortable*, you will say that there is a wide difference."

"Well, I will tell you what I would do were I in your place. It is now eleven o'clock; I would immediately send off some shrewd person——"

"Our head-man—there cannot be a more active man."

"Exactly the person. In about two hours he can be in Paris. Let him go to any upholsterer in the Chaussée d'Antin, it little matters which, and give him a list which I will draw up for you, as soon as I have seen the cottage. Then, the upholsterer must be told that, no matter at what cost——"

"Oh, of course; so that the duchess is only satisfied, cost is of no consequence."

"Well, the upholsterer must be told, then, that, at whatever cost, everything set down upon the list must be sent here this evening, or in the course of the night; and that with the goods he must send down three or four of his men to arrange everything as quickly as possible."

"They can come by the Gonesse coach, which leaves Paris at eight o'clock in the evening."

"Then, as nothing is wanted but just the carrying of the goods, nailing down the carpets, and putting up the curtains, all may quite easily be done before to-morrow evening."

"Oh, my good Mrs. George, from what perplexity you have relieved me! I should never have thought of all this! You are my deliverer! Now, will you make me out a list of all that is needed to make the lodge——"

"Comfortable? Yes, certainly."

"Bless me, there is another difficulty! We do not know whether our expected visitor is a gentleman or a lady. The letter of the duchess merely says *a person*. How perplexing, isn't it?"

"Then provide as if for a lady, my dear Mrs. Debreuil; and if the visitor should be a gentleman, he will find himself all the better accommodated."

"You are right—always right."

A farm-servant now announced that the breakfast was ready.

"We'll breakfast presently," said Mrs. George; "but first I will go and make out the list of what is necessary for the lodge, and have the rooms measured in height, breadth, and length, so that the curtains and carpets will come down ready to be fixed at once."

"Thank you, thank you; and I will set our overlooker about this business."

"Madame," continued the farm-servant, speaking to her mistress, "the new dairy-woman from Stains has come: her goods are in a little cart, drawn by a donkey. The poor thing's luggage seems but trifling."

"Poor woman!" said Mrs. Debreuil, in a kind tone.

"Who is this woman?" asked Mrs. George.

"A poor peasant from Stains, who lately had four cows, and made a very snug little business by going every morning to Paris to sell her milk. Her husband was a farrier, and, wanting to buy some iron, one day he went to Paris with his wife, and they agreed to meet each other at the corner of a street, where she was accustomed to sell her milk. Unfortunately the poor woman had set up business in a very bad part of Paris, as it would appear, for when her husband returned to her, he found her in the midst of some drunken fellows, who had been mischievous enough to overturn her milk into the gutter. The farrier tried to bring them to reason; they assaulted him—he defended himself, and in the fray he received a stab which laid him dead upon the spot."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Mrs. George; "was the assassin taken."

"Unfortunately, not. In the confusion he got off; but the poor widow is quite sure she should know him whenever she may meet him, as she had often seen him in company with other low fellows living in that neighbourhood; but, as yet, all search after him has been in vain. In short, since the death of her husband, the poor woman, to pay various debts, has been obliged to sell her cows and some little patches of land that she possessed. The bailiff of Stains Manor has recommended her to me as an excellent creature, as honest as she is unfortunate, for she has three children, of whom the eldest is not yet twelve years; so, having just now a place vacant, I have engaged her, and she has come to take up her abode here."

"I am not astonished at such kindness on your part, my dear Mrs. Debreuil."

"Clara," resumed the mistress of the farm, "will you go and install the poor woman in her new lodging, while I go and let our overseer know that it is necessary he should immediately set out for Paris?"

"Yes, mother, and Marie will go with me."

"Oh, certainly. How could you be separated?" said Mrs. Debreuil, smiling.

"And I, in the meantime," said Mrs. George, sitting down at the table, "will make out my list, so that no time will be lost; for Marie and I must return to Bouqueval by four o'clock."

"At four! You are indeed in haste," said Mrs. Debreuil.

"Yes, for Marie has to be at the parsonage by five o'clock."

"Oh, if it concerns good Abbé Laporte, I have not a word to say; the appointment is sacred," said Mrs. Debreuil. "I will give the necessary orders. As for these two children, no doubt they have many, many things to say to each other, and we must give them as much time to prattle as we can."

"Well, then, my dear Mrs. Debreuil, we will leave here at three o'clock."

"Let it be so; the cabriolet shall be ready for you. What a lucky thought it was of mine to send for you to come to my assistance!" said Mrs. Debreuil. "Come, Clara!—Come, Marie!"

While Mrs. George occupied herself in writing, Mrs. Debreuil left the room in one direction, and the two young girls in the other, in company with the servant who had announced the arrival of the poor woman from Stains.

"Where is this poor woman?" asked Clara.

"In the yard, with her children and her little donkey-cart, miss."

"You shall see her, Marie; poor thing!" said Clara, taking Goualeuse's arm. "She is so pale, and looks so sad in her deep, widow's weeds. The last time she came to see mother, she quite made my heart bleed. She shed hot tears as she spoke of her husband; then, suddenly, her tears stopped, and she burst into such a tempest of fury against his murderer! She actually frightened me at that moment, she looked so fierce; but, after all, her resentment is very natural. Oh, how unfortunate some people are, are they not, Marie?"

"Oh, yes! indeed, some people are unfortunate!" replied Goualeuse, sighing, and speaking as if her thoughts were wandering. "Oh—yes—you are right, miss."

"Come!" cried Clara, stamping her foot

vexedly: "again you call me 'Miss.' Are you offended with me, Marie?"

"*I* offended! good heavens!"

"Well, then, if you are not, why do you say *miss* to me? You know my mother and Mrs. George have scolded you for it already. I warn you, I will get you scolded again, naughty sister that you are!"

"Forgive me, Clara, my thoughts were wandering."

"Your thoughts wandering!—and yet you have not seen me for seven long days!" said Clara, mortified. "Thinking of somebody else!—that would be bad enough; but no, no, that's not it. See you, Marie—I shall, at last, think that you are proud!"

Fleur-de-Marie made no reply, while her face in an instant became pale as a corpse. At sight of her, a woman in the deep, first mourning of a widow, uttered a loud cry of horror and rage. This was the very woman from whom Goualeuse used every morning to buy her milk, while she lived with the Ogress, at the drinking-den.

The scene we are about to describe took place in one of the farm-yards, in presence of the labourers, both male and female, who had left work to get their mid-day meal. Under a shed stood a little barrow, to which a donkey was harnessed, the barrow containing the few household movables of the widow. A little boy of twelve years, assisted by two still younger children, was beginning to unload the vehicle. The milkwoman herself, completely dressed in black, appeared to be about forty years of age; her countenance was coarse, masculine, and resolute; and her eyes were inflamed, as with recent weeping. On perceiving Fleur-de-Marie, she at first uttered a cry of alarm; but quickly grief, indignation, and rage convulsed her features. She sprang towards Goualeuse, seized her brutally by the arm, and cried, as she exhibited her to the farm hands, "See, here is a wretch who knows the murderer of my poor husband! I have seen her talking to the villain twenty times, when I sold milk at the corner of the Rue de la Vieille Draperie! She used to buy a ha'p'orth of me every morning; she must know, well enough, the villain who stabbed him, for such loose characters as she know all the thieves and murderers. Oh, wretch! you shan't escape me, cunning as you are, depend on it!" cried the milkwoman, exasperated by her unfounded suspicions; and she seized the other arm of Marie, who trembling and bewildered, endeavoured to escape. Clara, dumbfounded at this sudden and unexpected attack, could not utter a word; but, seeing the woman grow more and more violent, she at length cried out:—

"Are you mad? Your grief has distracted you—you are altogether mistaken!"

"I mistaken!" replied the countrywoman, with a bitter sneer: "I mistaken! Oh, no, no! See, see how pale she's turned already! the wretch! How her teeth chatter! Justice will force you to speak, I'll warrant; you shall go with me before the magistrate! Do you hear! Oh, resisting's no use; I have a strong fist, you'll find; and rather than you shall not go, I'll carry you——"

"You insolent thing!" cried Clara, exasperated, "leave these premises directly! how dare you thus to insult my friend—my sister!"

"Your sister, miss! Come, now, that's a good joke; it is you who have lost your senses," replied the widow, coarsely. "Your sister!—what! a girl out of the streets, whom for six weeks together I have seen night-walking the City!"

At these words the labourers loudly murmured against Marie, naturally taking part with the milkwoman, who was of their own class, and whose misfortunes interested them. The three children, hearing their mother raise her voice, ran to her, and clung round her, crying, and wondering what was the matter. The appearance of these poor little creatures, attired in mourning, redoubled the sympathy which was inspired by the widow, and proportionately augmented the indignation of the labourers against Fleur-de Marie. Clara, frightened at these threatening demonstrations of violence, said to the farm-people, in a trembling-tone: "Take this woman away, I pray! I tell you that grief has maddened her. Marie, dear Marie! forgive her; the poor creature does not know what she is saying."

Sweet-throat, with bowed head, pale, terror-stricken, crushed and inert, no longer attempted to extricate herself from the tight grasp of the powerful milkwoman. Clara, attributing this depression to the fright which such a scene might well produce on her friend, again addressed the labourers, saying: "Did you not hear me? I desire you to take this woman away. As she persists in her insulting conduct, her audacity shall be punished by her being deprived of the place which my mother promised her; nor shall she ever again set foot on this farm."

Not one of the labourers stirred to obey Clara; on the contrary, one of the boldest of the party said: "But miss, if she is a street-walker, and knows the assassin of the poor woman's husband, she ought to be taken before the mayor."

"I tell you once more," said Clara, indignantly, addressing the milkwoman, "you shall never again set foot on the farm, unless you instantly ask pardon of Miss Marie for your gross insults."

"You order me off the premises then? So be it," said the widow, bitterly. "Come, poor orphans, load the cart again; we must endeavour to earn our bread elsewhere. God will pity us. But, at all events, we will drag with us this wretch, who shall be forced, before the mayor, to reveal the murderer of my poor husband—for she knows the whole gang. Because you are rich," added she, looking

widow, pensive and absorbed, kept her eyes fixed on Martial's window, which could be distinguished, through the poplar trees, from the shore.

During this time the two boats moved slowly off towards the opposite side.

CHAPTER XXXV.

DOES NOT A MEETING LIKE THIS MAKE AMENDS.

BEFORE we acquaint the reader with the continuation of the drama which passed on the boats, we will go back a little. A few moments after Fleur de Marie had left Saint Lazare with Mrs. Seraphin, La Louve had also quitted the prison.

Thanks to the recommendation of Madam Armand and of the director, who wished to recompense her for her good action towards Mont Saint Jean, she had been also pardoned and dismissed. A complete change had taken place in this creature, heretofore so head-strong, vile, and corrupted.

Keeping constantly in mind the description made by Fleur de Marie of a peaceful and solitary life, La Louve held in disgust her past crimes.

Confiding in the aid which Fleur de Marie had promised her in the name of her unknown benefactor, La Louve determined to make this laudable proposition to her lover, not without the bitter fear of a refusal, for the Goualeuse, in leading her to blush for the past, had also given her a consciousness of her position towards Martial.

Once free, La Louve only thought of seeing him. She had received no news from him for many days. In the hope of meeting him on Ravageurs' Island, she decided to wait there if she did not find him; she got into a cab, and was rapidly driven to the Bridge of Asnières, which she crossed about fifteen minutes before Mrs. Seraphin and Fleur de Marie, coming on foot, had arrived on the shore near the plaster-kiln.

As Martial did not come to take La Louve in his boat to the island, she applied to the old fisherman named Férot, who lived near the bridge.

At four o'clock in the afternoon a cab stopped at the entrance of a little street of Asnières village. La Louve gave five francs to the coachman, jumped to the ground, and ran hastily to the abode of Férot.

Having thrown off her prison dress, she wore a robe of dark green merino, a red shawl, imitation of cashmere, and a lace cap trimmed with ribbons: her thick crispy hair was scarcely smoothed. In her impatience to see Martial, she had dressed herself with more haste than care. On reaching the house of the fisherman, she found him seated at the door mending his nets.

As soon as she saw him she cried out, "Your boat, Férot—quick, quick."

"Ah! is it you? Good day, good day. You have not been here for a long time."

"Yes, but your boat—quick—to the island."

"Ah, well! fate will have it so; my good girl, it is impossible to-day."

"How?"

"My boy has taken my boat to go with the others to a rowing match at Saint Ouen. There is not a single boat left on the whole shore from this to the docks."

"Zounds!" cried La Louve, stamping and clenching her fists; "it happens so expressly for me!"

"Its true, on my word. I am very sorry I cannot convey you to the island, for, without doubt, he must be worse."

"Worse! Who?"

"Martial."

"Martial?" cried La Louve, seizing Férot by the collar; "is Martial sick?"

"Did you not know it?"

"Martial?"

"Yes, certainly; but you will tear my blouse; do be quiet."

"He is sick. Since when?"

"Two or three days ago."

"It is false; he would have written to me."

"Ah, well, yes! he is too sick to write."

"Too sick to write! And he is on the island; you are sure of that?"

"Don't get me into a scrape; this is the story: this morning I said to the widow, 'For two days past I have not seen Martial; his boat is there. Is he in the city?' Thereupon the widow looked at me with her wicked eyes: 'He is sick on the island; and so sick that he will never come off again.' I said to myself, 'How can that be? Three days ago'—Well," said Férot, interrupting himself, "where are you going to—where the devil is she running to now?"

Believing the life of Martial menaced by the inhabitants of the island, La Louve, overcome with alarm, and transported with rage, listened no longer to the fisherman, but ran along the Seine.

Some topographical details are indispensable to understand the following scene.

The island approached nearer the left side of the river than the right shore, from whence Fleur de Marie and Mrs. Seraphin had embarked. La Louve was on the left side. Without being very steep, the hills on the island concealed, all its length, the view of one shore from the other. Thus, La Louve had not seen the embarcation of La Goualeuse, and the Martial family, of course, could not see her as she ran along the shore on the opposite side.

We recall to the reader, that the country-house belonging to Doctor Griffon, where the Count de Saint Rémy temporarily dwelt, was built on the hill-side, near the shore where La Louve was wandering, half-distracted.

She passed, without seeing them, near two persons, who, struck with her haggard look, turned to follow her at a distance. These

two persons were the Count de Saint Rémy and Doctor Griffon.

The first impulse of La Louve, on learning the peril of her lover, had been to run impetuously towards the place where she knew he was in danger. But as she approached the island, she thought of the difficulty of getting there. As the old fisherman had told her, she could not count on any strange boat, and no one from the Martial family would come for her.

Breathless, her face flushed, her eyes sparkling, she stopped opposite a point of the island which, forming a curve at this place, was nearest to the mainland. Through the leafless branches of the willows and poplars, La Louve could see the roof of the house, where, perhaps, Martial was dying. At this sight, uttering a fearful groan, she tore off her shawl and cap, and slipping down her robe, keeping on her petticoat, she threw herself into the river, and waded until she lost her footing, when she began to swim vigorously towards the island.

It was the climax of savage energy.

At each stroke, the thick and long hair of La Louve, untied by the violence of her movements, shook about her head like a shaggy mane of copper colour.

Suddenly, from the other side of the island resounded a cry of distress, of terrible, desperate agony. La Louve shuddered, and stopped short. Then treading water, with one hand she pushed back her thick hair, and listened. A new cry was heard, but more feeble, more supplicating, convulsive, expiring—and all relapsed into a profound silence. "My Martial!" cried La Louve, swimming again with all her strength. She thought she had recognised the voice of Martial.

The count and doctor had not been able to follow La Louve quick enough to prevent what she accomplished. They arrived opposite to the island at the moment that the two fearful screams were heard, and stopped, as much alarmed as La Louve. Seeing her struggle intrepidly against the current, they cried, "The poor thing will be drowned!" These fears were vain; she swam like an otter; still a few more strokes, and she reached the land. She was getting out of the water by the assistance of the poles, which as we have said, formed a breakwater at the end of the island, when she perceived the body of a young girl, dressed as a peasant, sustained by her clothes, floating down the current.

To grasp with one hand the poles, and with the other to seize hold of the girl by her dress, such was the movement of La Louve, as rapid as thought. Then she drew her so violently towards her and within the stakes, that, for a moment, she disappeared under the water, which was of no great depth at this place.

Endued with no common strength and address, La Louve raised up La Goualeuse (for it was she), whom she had not yet recognised, took her up in her robust arms, as one would have taken a child, made some steps in the water, and, finally, laid her on the green bank of the island.

"Courage, courage!" cried M. de Saint Rémy to her, a witness, as well as Doctor Griffon, of this bold act. "We are going to cross the bridge, and will come to your aid in a boat." La Louve did not hear these words. Let us repeat, that from the right shore of the Seine, where Nicholas, Calabash, and their mother remained after the consummation of their horrible crime, nothing could be seen of the other side, owing to the height of the island. Fleur de Marie, suddenly drawn within the row of piles by La Louve, having plunged for a moment, and not reappearing to the sight of her murderers, they believed their victim drowned and ingulfed.

Some few moments afterward, the current brought down another body, in an eddy, which La Louve did not perceive. It was the corpse of the notary's housekeeper. Dead—quite dead—this one.

Nicholas and Calabash had as much interest as Jacques Ferrand to get rid of this witness, the accomplice of their new crime; so when the boat with the hole sunk with Fleur de Marie, Nicholas, springing into the boat of his sister, nearly upset it, and seizing a favourable moment, threw the housekeeper into the river, and despatched her with the boat-hook.

Out of breath and exhausted, La Louve, kneeling on the ground alongside of Fleur de Marie, recruited her strength, and examined the features of her whom she had rescued from death. Let her surprise be imagined when she recognised her companion of the prison; who had exercised upon her destiny an influence so rapid, so ameliorating. In her surprise, for a moment she forgot Martial.

"La Goualeuse!" cried she.

With bended body, leaning on her hands and knees, her hair dishevelled, her clothes dripping with water, she contemplated the unhappy child, extended, almost expiring on the ground. Pale, inanimate, her eyes half open and without expression, her beautiful flaxen hair falling flat over her forehead, her blue lips, her small hand, already stiff and icy—one would have thought her dead. "La Goualeuse!" repeated La Louve, "what chance! I who came to tell my Martial the good and evil she had done me with her words and promises; the resolution that I had taken. Poor little thing! I find her here, dead. But no, no," cried La Louve, approaching still nearer to Fleur de Marie, and feeling an almost imperceptible breath escape from her mouth: "No! she breathes still! I have saved her from death! that has never happened to me before, to save anyone. Ah! that does me good; it makes me warm. Yes, but my Martial I must save also. Perhaps, at this moment, he is expiring; his mother and brother are capable of killing him. Yet I cannot leave this poor little thing here. I

modesty revolted at the recollection of the class to which the unfortunate had belonged, and they shuddered to be near one who, moreover, had confessed that she had often conversed with assassins. What more, then, was wanted to urge on this prejudiced crowd, encouraged as they had been by the example of Mrs. Debreuil?

"We must take her before the mayor!" cried one.

"Yes, yes; and if she will not walk we will drag her."

"And such a draggle-tail dared to dress like one of us honest country girls!" said one of the clumsiest and ugliest wenches of the farm.

"Well, I'm sure," added another, "with her saintly phiz, one would think she would get to heaven without confession."

"Why, she even had the impudence to go to mass!"

"The hardened creature! why not have taken the sacrament at once?"

"Oh yes, and must needs associate with our betters!"

"As though we poor people were not good enough for such creatures as she!"

"Well, every dog has his day!"

"Oh, you had better confess, and tell who it was that murdered my poor husband!" vociferated the widow. "You are all of the same gang; indeed, I am not even sure that I did not see you among them on that very day. Come, come, snivelling here is of no use now you are found out. Show us your face, it is well enough to look at!" The widow brutally pulled down both the hands with which the poor girl was concealing her pale features, bathed in tears.

Goualeuse, at first sinking under a sense of shame, became terrified at thus finding herself at the mercy of these enraged people; she clasped her hands, and turning her meek and supplicating eyes towards the milkwoman, said, in her gentle voice: "Indeed, indeed, madame, for the last two months I have been living at the farm of Bouqueval, therefore I cannot have witnessed the misfortune you speak of, and——"

The timid voice was drowned by these furious outcries:

"Take her before the mayor, she shall explain to him!"

"Come, march on, my fine lady!"

The threatening group closed upon the poor girl, who, crossing her hands mechanically upon her bosom, looked around her, as if in search of help.

"Oh!" cried the milkwoman, "it's no use to look about you; Miss Clara is not here to defend you now; you shall not escape us."

"Alas, madame," said Fleur-de-Marie, trembling, "I seek not to escape from you; I will answer all questions put to me, if that can serve you. But what harm have I ever done to all these persons who threaten and surround me?"

"You have done this to us! you have had the impudence to associate with our masters and mistresses, which we, who are a thousand times better than you, are not allowed to do—that's what you have done to us."

"And why did you want to get this poor widow and her children driven away?" asked another.

"It was not I, but Miss Clara, who wished——"

"A lie!" interrupted the labourer who had last spoken; "you did not so much as speak a word for her; you jumped for joy to see her and her children deprived of bread!"

"No, no, she did not even speak a good word for the poor things!"

"Oh, she's a regular bad one!"

"A poor widow, too, mother of three children!"

"If I did not ask pardon for her," said Fleur-de-Marie, "it was because I had not strength to speak a word."

"You could find strength enough to speak to murderers!"

As it usually happens, in cases of popular commotion, these country-people, more ignorant than wicked, actually *intoxicated* themselves with their own furious words, and became fiercer and fiercer at every fresh threat or insult hurled at their unhappy victim.

The menacing circle drew closer and closer around Fleur-de-Marie, all gesticulating as they spoke; the farrier's widow especially seemed to have lost all control over herself. Separated only from the deep water-pit by the parapet upon which she was leaning, Goualeuse trembled at the idea of their pushing her backward into the water; and extending towards them her clasped hands, exclaimed, in a supplicating tone, "In heaven's name, what is it you would of me? For mercy's sake, do not ill-treat me!" As the milkwoman, with fierce and violent gesticulation, kept approaching nearer and nearer, thrusting her clenched fists almost into her face, Fleur-de-Marie, shrinking back in terror, cried in the most piteous tones, "I implore you, madame, do not press so closely on me, or I'll fall into the water."

"These words of Fleur-de-Marie awakened a cruel idea in the minds of these rude people. Thinking only of one of those practical jokes common among boors, but which often terminate but little short of the death of their subject, one of the noisiest and most violent of the labourers called out, "A ducking! let us give the witch a ducking!"

"Yes, yes, into the water—in with her!" was repeated with bursts of laughter and frantic applause.

"That's the best thing for her; a good ducking won't kill her!"

"That'll teach her not to mix with honest folks again."

"Yes, yes, in with her—in with her!"

"Luckily, the ice was broken this morning."

"Yes, yes, we'll give the girl of the streets

something to remember the honest people of Arnouville farm!"

Hearing these inhuman cries and cruel jests, and seeing the exasperation that was expressed upon the brutally excited countenances of those who approached to carry out the threat, Fleur-de-Marie gave herself up for lost. To her first thrill of alarm, however, succeeded a sort of gloomy satisfaction: the future appeared to her so dark, that she mentally thanked heaven for abridging her sufferings; she uttered no word of complaint, but fell on her knees, piously crossed her arms upon her bosom, closed her eyes, and awaited her doom in prayer. The labourers, surprised at the attitude and the mute resignation of Marie, hesitated for a moment to pursue their savage purpose; but, taunted for their weakness by the female part of the assemblage, they recommenced their shouts, as though to work themselves up into the courage to carry out their evil design. Two of the most furious among them were on the point of seizing Marie, when an agitated and thrilling voice exclaimed, "Stop! desist!" and at the same moment Mrs. George, who had forced herself a passage through the crowd, reached the still-kneeling Marie, raised her in her arms, and cried, "Stand up, my child! stand up, my beloved daughter; we should kneel only before God!"

The expression and attitude of Mrs. George were so full of imperious courage, that the crowd drew back in silence. Indignation flushed her usually pale features, and casting on the labourers a stern look, she said to them, in a loud and threatening voice, "Wretches! are you not ashamed to proceed to such brutal violence with this unfortunate child?"

"She is a——"

"She is my daughter!" cried Mrs. George, with severity, interrupting the man who was about to speak. "Abbé Laporte, whom all bless and revere, loves and protects her, and those whom he esteems ought to be respected by every one."

These simple words silenced the crowd. The Curé of Bouqueval was looked upon in that district almost as a saint; and many present knew how much the good old man interested himself in Goualeuse. However, some confused murmurs were still raised. Mrs. George fully comprehended their meaning, and said: "If even this unfortunate girl were the lowest of the low, and abandoned by all the world, your conduct towards her would be none the less odious! For what would you punish her?—by what authority? Can you call yourselves men, who would exert your strength against one feeble, unresisting female! Come, Marie, come, my poor child, let us return home—there, at least, you are known and valued."

Mrs. George took the arm of Fleur-de-Marie; and the labourers, confused, and conscious of the brutality of their conduct, respectfully made way for them. The widow alone advanced resolutely, and confronting Mrs. George, she said: "I don't care what you say, not I! This girl shall not go until she has deposed before the mayor on the subject of the murder of my poor husband."

"My good friend," said Mrs. George, restraining her indignation, "my daughter has no evidence to give here; if at any future time justice require her testimony, let her be called for, and I will accompany her. Until then, no one has a right to question her."

"But, madame, I tell you——"

Mrs. George cut short the milkwoman, by saying, sternly, "Scarcely can your severe misfortune excuse your conduct: you will some day bitterly regret the violence you have so imprudently excited. Mademoiselle Marie lives with me at Bouqueval farm, make that known to the magistrate who receives your deposition; we will await his orders."

The widow was unable to argue against such cool reasoning: she seated herself on the parapet of the drinking-place, and wept bitterly as she embraced her children. Almost immediately after this scene, Pierre brought the cabriolet, into which Mrs. George and Fleur-de-Marie stepped to return to Bouqueval.

As they passed before the farm-house of Arnouville, Goualeuse perceived Clara weeping bitterly as she stood half-concealed behind a partly-closed outer blind: she waved her handkerchief to Fleur-de-Marie in token of adieu.

"Oh, madame; what shame for me, and what grief to you!" said Fleur-de-Marie to her adopted mother, when they were once more alone in the little parlour of the farm of Bouqueval. "Doubtless you are for ever at variance with Mrs. Debreuil, and all on my account! Oh, my presentiments! God has punished me for having deceived that lady and her daughter. I am the cause of discord between you and your friend!"

"My friend is an excellent woman, my dear child, but she has a poor, weak head; still, as she has a good heart, to-morrow I am sure she will regret her foolish conduct of to-day."

"Alas, madame, do not for a moment think that I wish to justify her by accusing you; God forbid! but your kindness to me has perhaps blinded you. Place yourself in the situation of Mrs. Debreuil. Learning that the companion of her beloved daughter was—what *I* was—say, can you blame her maternal indignation?"

Unfortunately, Mrs. George could not find a word in reply to this question, and Fleur-de-Marie continued with increased excitement: "This disgraceful scene will soon be known and talked about all through the country. It is not for myself I fear; but who knows whether the reputation of Mdlle. Clara may not be tainted, because she kindly

called me her friend—her sister? I ought to have obeyed my first impulse—resist the inclination which drew me so strangely towards Mrs. Debreuil; at the risk of inspiring her with dislike, I ought to have avoided the friendship which she offered me. But I forgot the distance which separates me from her, and thus I am punished, oh! how cruelly punished! for perhaps I have done an irreparable injury to a kind and virtuous girl."

"My child," said Mrs. George, after a few moments' reflection, "you are wrong to reproach yourself thus. True, your past life has been sinful—yes, deeply sinful; but is it nothing to have merited, by your penitence, the protection of our venerable Curé? Was it not under his auspices and mine that you were presented to Mrs. Debreuil? Did not your own good qualities alone inspire the attachment which she so freely declared for you? Did not she herself first bid you call Clara your sister? And then, as I just now said to her—for I could not and would not conceal anything—could I, certain as I was of your repentance, divulge the past, and thus render your re-establishment in virtue and respectability so much the more difficult, perhaps impossible, by casting you back on the scorn and derision of those who, if equally guilty, equally unfortunate as you have been, would not perhaps, as you have, preserved the intuitive principles of honour and virtue? The exposure caused by that widow is mischievous, fatal; but ought I, even had I foreseen its possibility, to sacrifice the repose of your whole future life to an almost improbable casualty?"

"Oh, madame! what proves my position to be for ever false and miserable, is, that out of your affection for me, you have found it necessary to hide the past, while Clara's mother is entitled to despise me for that past—to despise me as the whole world henceforth will despise me; for the scene at the farm of Arnouville will be quickly spread abroad—all will be known. Oh, I shall die of shame! I shall never more be able to meet the looks of any one!"

"Not even mine, my child?" said Mrs. George, bursting into tears, and opening her arms to Marie. "In my heart, you shall ever find towards you the tenderness—the devotion of a mother. Courage, Marie; support yourself with the consciousness of your repentance. Here you are surrounded by friends; let this house be your world. We will anticipate the exposure you so much dread. Our good abbé shall assemble the farm-people, who are already so much attached to you, and he shall tell them the truth as to the past. Believe me, my child, his word has so much authority, that this disclosure will only increase the interest already felt for you."

"I believe you, madame, and resign myself. Yesterday, in our conversation, M. le Curé predicted to me that I should be called on to make painful expiations; they have already begun, and I ought not to be astonished. He also told me that my sufferings will one day be accounted unto me; I fain would hope so. Sustained in my trials by him, by you, I will not complain."

"You shall go to him presently, and never can his advice be more salutary to you. It is already half-past four o'clock, so you had better prepare yourself for your visit to the parsonage, my child. I am about to write to M. Rudolph, to make him acquainted with what has taken place at the farm of Arnouville: my letter I will send express: that done, I will join you at the house of our good abbé, for it is important that we should all three have some conversation together."

Shortly after, Goualeuse left the farm, on her way to the parsonage, by the ravine-road, where the Screech-Owl, the Schoolmaster, and Hoppy, had agreed to meet.

* * * * *

As may have been seen, from her conversations with Mrs. George and the Curé of Bouqueval, Fleur-de-Marie had so nobly profited by the precepts of her benefactors, so completely imbibed their principles, that she despaired more and more, as she reflected upon her past degradation. Her mind expanded as her noble instincts developed themselves and fructified in the atmosphere of honour and purity in which she now lived. Had she possessed less lofty intelligence, less exquisite sensibility, or less lively imagination, Fleur-de-Marie would have been easily comforted; but, unfortunately, not a single day passed in which she did not recall, nay, almost live over again, in an agony of horror and disgust, the disgraceful miseries of her past existence. Let us picture to ourselves a mere child of sixteen, conscious of her purity and candour, hurled by some infernal power into the infamous den of the Ogress, and helplessly subjected to the domination of that diabolical fury. Such, in the mind of Fleur-de-Marie, was the reaction of the past upon the present. Let us further realize the species of retrospective feeling, or rather, the moral recoil under which Goualeuse suffered so cruelly, that she regretted, more frequently than she had dared to avow to the good abbé, that she had not perished in the kennel of her past degradation.

However little one may possess of reflection or the experience of life, what we are about to say can scarcely be mistaken for a paradox: Fleur-de-Marie was worthy of interest and of pity, not only because her affection had never been aroused, but because her senses had always remained slumbering and frozen. As it has been often known that females, less gifted with delicacy than Fleur-de-Marie, have an invincible repugnance that long survives the legalized liberties of a husband, shall we be astonished that this unfortunate girl, dragged by the Ogress, and

unconsciously ruined, thrown at sixteen years of age among the horde of ferocious brutes that infest the City, had experienced only horror and disgust, and had come forth morally pure from that sink of corruption?

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE ROAD IN THE CUTTING.

THE sun was sinking below the horizon; the plains were deserted and silent. Fleur-de-Marie drew near the entrance of the deep-set road which she had to go through to reach the parsonage, when she saw issuing from the ravine a little lame boy, dressed in a grey blouse and a blue cap. He appeared to be crying, and the instant he saw Goualeuse, ran towards her.

"Oh, my kind lady, pray have pity on me!" he cried, clasping his hands with a supplicating gesture.

"What do you want?—what is the matter with you, my child?" asked Sweet-throat, in a tone of interest.

"Alas! my kind lady, my poor grandmother, who is very, very old, has fallen down yonder, as she was descending the ravine; she has hurt herself very much; I am afraid her leg is broken; I am too weak to lift her up. Good lord! what shall I do, unless you assist me? My poor old grandmother will, perhaps, die!"

The Goualeuse, touched by the little cripple's grief, exclaimed, "I am not very strong myself, child, but perhaps I can help you to lift your grandmother. Quick! lead me to her. I live at yonder farm: and if the poor old woman cannot walk there with our help, I will go back and send some person to help her."

"Oh, my kind lady, heaven will bless you for it, sure! She is close by—a few steps from the ravine-road, as I told you before: it was coming down the bank she fell."

"You don't belong to this part of the country, then?" asked Goualeuse, as she followed Hoppy, who, no doubt, has already been recognized by the reader.

"No, my kind lady, we come from Ecouen."

"And whither are you going?"

"To a good priest, who lives on yonder hill," said Red Arm's son, to increase the confidence of Fleur-de-Marie.

"To Abbé Laporte, perhaps?"

"Yes, my kind Lady—to Abbé Laporte's. My poor grandmother knows him very, very well."

"What a strange chance! I am myself going directly to his house," replied Marie, entering further and further into the ravine-road.

"Grandmother! I'm coming! I'm coming! Be patient; I am bringing you help!" shouted Hoppy, to prepare the Schoolmaster and the Owl to seize upon their victim.

"It is not far from here, then, that your grandmother has fallen?" said Goualeuse.

"No, my kind lady; just behind that large tree where the road bends, about twenty paces hence."

Hoppy stopped suddenly. The noise of a horse galloping echoed amid the silence of the plain.

"All is again lost!" muttered he.

A few yards from the spot which Goualeuse and the boy had now reached, the road made a very sudden turn. A horseman appeared at this angle, and, as he neared Goualeuse, reined up. At the same time the trot of another horse was heard, and in a few moments a servant appeared, dressed in a brown coat with silver buttons, white buckskin breeches, and top-boots. A narrow buff-leather belt held the macintosh of his master, strapped to his back. The gentleman was simply dressed in a thick, bronze-green coat, and tight-fitting grey pantaloons, and rode a thoroughbred bay of singular beauty; notwithstanding the long distance it had galloped, this noble animal had not turned a hair, and showed not the least bead of moisture on the lustrous gloss of its coat. The grey horse of the groom, which stood motionless several paces in the rear of his master, was also of clean strain. In the dark and handsome-faced gentleman Hoppy recognized the Viscount de Saint-Remy, the reputed lover of the Duchess de Lucenay.

"My pretty maid," said the viscount to Goualeuse, whose beauty surprised him, "will you be so obliging as to inform me the road to the village of Arnouville?"

Fleur-de-Marie, casting down her eyes beneath the bold and admiring look of the young man, replied: "On quitting the hollow way, sir, take the first turning to the right; that road will lead you to an avenue of cherry-trees, which runs straight to Arnouville."

"A thousand thanks, my pretty maid; you give me rather clearer directions than an old woman who is lying at the foot of a tree, a few paces round the corner of the road; I could get nothing from her but groans."

"My poor grandmother!" said Hoppy, in a whining voice.

"Stay! one word more," said Saint-Remy, addressing Goualeuse; can you tell me if I can easily find the farm of M. Debreuil, at Arnouville?"

Goualeuse could not repress a slight shudder at these words, which vividly recalled to her mind the painful scene of that morning: she replied, "The buildings of the farm skirt the avenue which leads into Arnouville."

"Thanks again, my pretty maid," said Saint-Remy, and he galloped off, followed by his groom.

The handsome features of the viscount, although slightly unwrinkled as he spoke to Fleur-de-Marie, became, when alone again, darkened and contracted by painful anxiety.

Fleur-de-Marie, remembering what she had heard of the unknown personage for whom the lodge of the farm at Arnouville was being prepared in such haste, by the orders of the Duchess de Lucenay, felt no doubt that it was for this handsome young cavalier. The sounds of the horses' feet was heard for some time as they galloped on the frozen ground; it gradually grew fainter and fainter, and soon all was once more hushed in silence. Hoppy breathed again. Wishing to encourage and forewarn his accomplices, one of whom, the Schoolmaster, was hidden from the sight of the horsemen, the imp called out: "Grandmother, here I am, with a good young lady, who is going to help you!"

"Quick, quick, my boy! The gentleman on horseback has caused us to loose some minutes!" said Goualeuse, hastening forward to reach the turning into the hollow way.

Scarcely had she entered it, when the Owl, who lay ambushed there, exclaimed: "Now! now, my blade!" Then springing on Goualeuse, the one-eyed hag grasped her throat with one hand, and clapped the other over her mouth: while Hoppy, throwing himself at the young girl's feet, clung round her legs so as to prevent her stirring a step.

All this passed so rapidly that the Screech-Owl had no time to examine the features of Goualeuse; but, during the few moments taken by the Schoolmaster to emerge from his hiding-place, and to grope his way along with his cloak, the old woman recognized her former victim.

"The Nimming Kid!" yelled the astounded hag: then with savage delight, she added: "What! you again! Oh! the *baker* has sent you! 'Tis your luck always to fall into my clutches. I have my vitriol in the coach! This time I'll spoil your pretty skin, for you give me the sneezes with that Virgin-face of yours! Mind what you're about, my man—take care she does not bite you, and hold her fast while we wrap her up."

With his powerful hands the Schoolmaster seized Goualeuse, and, before she could utter a single cry, the Owl had thrown the cloak over her head, and bound it tightly round her. Thus, almost in an instant, Fleur-de-Marie, bound and gagged, was placed beyond the possibility of making a movement or calling for assistance. "Now, my blade, take up your bundle!" said the Owl. "I say! it isn't so heavy as the bundle of the woman we drowned in the canal Saint Martin, is it, my man?" As the brigand shuddered at the words, which reminded him of his dreadful dream over-night, the hag went on: "Halloo! what ails you, my blade?—one would think you were shivering. Ever since morning, your teeth every now and then chatter, as if you had the shakes; and then you look up into the air, as if you were trying to see something!"

"Bless you, he's shamming blind!—he is looking after flies!" said Hoppy.

"Come, quick!—forward with you, my man! Up with the girl! That's the ticket!" added the Owl, as she saw the ruffian lift Fleur-de-Marie in his arms, as he would carry a sleeping child. "Quick, to the coach!—quick!"

"But who will lead me?" asked the Schoolmaster, in a hollow voice, securing his light and flexible burthen in his Herculean arms.

"Old wisehead again! he thinks of everything!" observed the Screech-Owl.

Then, taking off her shawl, she untied a red pocket-handkerchief which covered her skinny neck, twisted it lengthwise, and said to the Schoolmaster: "Open your muzzle, and take the end of this *wipe* in your *grinders*. Hold tight! Hoppy will take the other end in his hand, and all you've to do is to follow him. A good blind man deserves a good dog! Here, Mischief!"

The little deformity turned a hand-spring, gave a low, odd sort of yapping bark, took the other end of the handkerchief in his hand, and thus led the Schoolmaster, whilst the Owl hurried forward to notify their coming to Barbillon. We renounce attempting to paint the terror of Fleur-de-Marie when she found herself in the power of the Owl and the Schoolmaster. Her senses left her, and, helpless, she offered not the slightest resistance.

In a few minutes Goualeuse was placed in the coach, driven by Barbillon; although it was night, the blinds were carefully closed, and the three accomplices directed their course, with their almost expiring victim, towards the plain of Saint Denis, where Sir Thomas Seyton awaited them.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

CLEMENCE D'HARVILLE.

THE reader must excuse us for abandoning one of our heroines in so critical a situation, the result of which we shall state hereafter.

It will be remembered that Rudolph had saved Lady d'Harville from an imminent danger, contrived by the jealousy of Sarah, who had apprised d'Harville of the meeting which his wife had so imprudently granted to M. Charles Robert. Deeply moved by that scene, the prince returned home on leaving the house in the Rue du Temple, postponing his intended visit to Miss Dimpleton, and the family of the unfortunate artizan of whom we have spoken: for he supposed them placed beyond immediate want by means of the money he had given to the marchioness, in order that her pretended charitable visit to the house might seem more plausible in the eyes of Lord d'Harville. Unfortunately, Rudolph was ignorant of Hoppy's theft of the purse, although the reader is acquainted with the manner in

which the little cripple had effected the audacious robbery.

About four o'clock, the prince received the following letter, brought by an old woman, who left instantly, without waiting an answer :—

"YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS,—I owe you more than life, and wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to you this very day. To-morrow, perhaps, shame would close my lips. If your royal highness will honour me with a call this evening, you will end the day as you began it—by a generous action.

"D'ORBIGNY D'HARVILLE.

"P.S.—Do not trouble yourself to reply to this note ; I shall be at home the whole evening."

Rudolph, happy as he was to have rendered Lady d'Harville so eminent a service, regretted, nevertheless, the forced intimacy thus suddenly established between him and the marchioness. Incapable of betraying the friendship of d'Harville, yet deeply struck by the grace, intellect, and beauty of Clémence, Rudolph, after a month's assiduous attendance on his arrival in Paris, had perceived that he was dangerously attracted towards her. He therefore almost entirely denied himself the pleasure of seeing her. It was with emotion, too, that he remembered the conversation he had overheard in the winter-garden of the Ambassadress of —— between Sir Thomas Seyton and Lady Macgregor. The latter, to account for her hatred and jealousy, had, with some appearance of plausibility, affirmed that Lady d'Harville still entertained, almost unconsciously, a serious affection for Rudolph. Sarah was too sagacious, too acute, too learned in the mysteries of the human heart, to be unaware that Clémence—believing herself neglected, perhaps disdained, by a man who had made so deep an impression upon her, had, in her vexation, and in compliance with the importunities of a perfidious friend, allowed herself to be interested in the imaginary woes of M. Charles Robert, without completely forgetting Rudolph. Other women, indeed, faithful to the memory of the man who first fixed their admiration, would have remained wholly insensible to the melancholy looks of the Commander. Clémence d'Harville, therefore, was doubly guilty, although she had yielded only to the seduction of pity ; and although a lively sense of duty, joined, perhaps, to remembrance of the prince, had preserved her from the commission of an irreparable crime.

Rudolph, as he thought of his interview with Lady d'Harville, was a prey to strange contradictions. Fully resolved to resist the infatuation which drew him towards her, he thought himself fortunate in being able to cast off his love, by reproaching her with the choice of such a person as M. Charles Robert ; and, on the contrary, he bitterly regretted the dispersion of the flattering illusion with which he had hitherto surrounded her.

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Clémence d'Harville also looked forward to this interview with anxiety ;—the two feelings which predominated being a painful confusion when she remembered Rudolph's generous interference, and a profound aversion when she thought of M. Charles Robert. Several reasons prompted this aversion, which rose almost to hatred. A woman will risk her peace and honour for a man ; but she will never forgive him for having placed her in a ridiculous or humiliating position. Lady d'Harville felt her cheeks flush with shame and indignation when she called to mind her exposure to the sarcasms and insulting looks of Mrs. Pipelet. Nor was this all. Warned by Rudolph of her danger, Clémence had hastened towards the fifth story of the house, and in doing so, owing to the position of the staircase, she had perceived M. Charles Robert, dressed in his gaudy morning-gown, at the moment when, hearing the light footsteps of the woman whom he so impatiently expected, he half opened his door with a smiling, confident, and triumphant look. The insolent familiarity expressed by the Commander's *loose* costume told the marchioness at a glance how much she had been deceived in the man. Led away by the goodness of her heart, and the imprudent generosity of her disposition, she had consented to this meeting, not from love, but purely commiseration, and in order to console him for the ridiculous part which the vulgarity of the Duke de Lucenay had compelled M. Robert to play before her at the embassy. Words cannot describe the disgust and annoyance of Lady d'Harville at the sight of the Commander, whose gorgeous *deshabille* and jaunty aspect bore the appearance of insolent *discounting* triumph.

Nine o'clock sounded from the timepiece in the small apartment which Lady d'Harville usually occupied. Upholsterers and tavern-keepers have so abused and exaggerated the style of Louis XV. and the *Renaissance*, that the marchioness, a woman of elegant taste, had banished from her own apartments that gorgeous furniture, now become so vulgar, and confined it to that part of the hotel devoted to grand receptions. Nothing more elegant nor more distinguished could be devised than the fitting up of the apartment in which the marchioness awaited Rudolph. The curtains—which, devoid of valances or draperies, were of Indian texture—were of straw colour, and on this cheerful ground were embroidered, in dead silk of the same shade, the most charming and fanciful arabesques. Double curtains of Alençon lace entirely concealed the windows. The rosewood doors were set off by silver-gilt mouldings, very delicately chased, surrounding in every panel an oval medallion of Sèvres porcelain, nearly a foot in diameter, representing birds and

flowers of a most exquisite finish and brilliancy. The mirror-frames and the curtain-rods were also of rosewood, relieved by the same narrow ornaments of silver-gilt. The frieze of the white marble chimney-piece, and its pair of caryatides, of antique grace and exquisite beauty, were the work of Marochetti's masterly chisel—that eminent artist having consented to sculpture this delightful *chef d'œuvre;* no doubt, remembering that Benvenuto Cellini did not disdain to bestow his genius upon wine-jugs and armour. Two candelabras and two candlesticks, parcel-gilt, exquisitely chased by Gouttière, stood on each side of the timepiece, formed of a square block of lapis lazuli, raised on a pedestal of oriental jasper, and surmounted by a large and magnificent cupola of enamelled gold, studded with pearls and rubies, belonging to the best period of Florentine *Renaissance.* Many excellent pictures of the Venetian school, of moderate dimensions, completed this union of chaste and tasteful splendour.

Thanks to a charming innovation, this handsome room was lighted by a lamp, the ground-glass globe of which was half hidden amidst a tuft of natural flowers contained in a large, deep Japanese bowl, beautifully painted in azure and gold, suspended from the ceiling like a lustre by three massive chains of silver-gilt, around which twined the green stems of several parasitic plants; some of the flexible and flower-laden curls hung down over the edges of the bowl, forming a graceful fringe of cool, fresh verdure upon the porcelain, enamelled with purple, azure, and gold. We have dwelt on these details, trifling as they may seem, in order to convey some idea of the natural good taste of Lady d'Harville (almost always allied to an elevated mind), and because there are certain mysterious griefs which seem still more poignant when contrasted with those appearances which, in general estimation, render life happy and enviable.

Buried in a large armchair, entirely covered with straw-coloured silk, sat Clémence d'Harville; her hair plain. She wore a high black velvet dress, which displayed with admirable effect the beautiful workmanship of a deep collar and cuffs of English point, and prevented the blackness of the velvet from contrasting too suddenly with the dazzling whiteness of her hands and throat.

In proportion as the moment for the marchioness's interview with Rudolph approached, her emotion increased. At length, however, her confusion gave place to more resolute thoughts, and, after mature reflection, she determined on confiding to Rudolph a great, a painful secret, hoping that her frankness would perhaps restore her to the esteem she now valued so highly. Revived by gratitude, her first partiality for Rudolph had returned with new strength, for one of those secret whispers which rarely deceive the loving heart, told her that it was not mere chance that had brought the prince so opportunely to her aid; and that, in avoiding her for some months previously, he had yielded to a sentiment the very opposite of indifference. A vague instinct also awakened in the mind of Clémence some doubts of the sincerity of Sarah's affection. A few minutes had elapsed when a servant, after gently tapping at the door, entered, and said: "Will it please your ladyship to see Mrs. Asthon and the young lady?"

Lady d'Harville nodded assent, and her daughter slowly entered the room.

The child was four years old, and would have been charmingly beautiful, but for the sickly pallor of her countenance, and the extreme wasting of her person. Mrs. Asthon, the governess, led her by the hand, but directly Clara (that was the name of the child) saw her mother, she extended her arms, and, in spite of her weakness, ran towards her. Her light brown hair was plaited and tied each side of her forehead with bows of cherry-coloured riband. Her health was so delicate that she wore an over-dress of dark-brown silk, thickly wadded, instead of one of those pretty white muslin frocks trimmed with ribands of a similar colour to those in the hair, and low-necked, so as to show the plump, pink arms, and smooth, fair shoulders, so lovely in healthy children. So sunken were Clara's cheeks, that her dark eyes looked preternaturally large; but, weak as she appeared, a gentle, graceful smile lighted her features when she was placed upon her mother's lap, and embraced with sad and impassioned tenderness.

"How has she been of late, Mrs. Asthon?" asked Lady d'Harville of the old governess.

"Pretty well, my lady; though once I was afraid——"

"Again!" exclaimed Clémence, folding her daughter to her heart, with an involuntary movement of alarm.

"Fortunately, madame, I was deceived," said the governess, "the fit did not come on. Mdlle. Clara became composed, and only suffered under a momentary weakness. She has slept a little this afternoon, but she was unwilling to go to bed without kissing her mamma."

"Poor, dear little angel!" said Lady d'Harville, covering her daughter with tender kisses.

The little girl returned these caresses with childish joy, when the folding-doors of the room were suddenly thrown open, and the groom of the chamber announced, "His Royal Highness the Grand Duke of Gerolstein!"

Clara, standing upon her mother's lap, had folded her little arms round her neck, and was closely embracing her. At sight of Rudolph, Clémence blushed deeply, placed her child gently on the carpet, motioned Mrs. Asthon to take her from the room, and rose.

"Will your ladyship allow me," said Rudolph, smiling, after having respectfully bowed to the marchioness, "to renew my

acquaintance with my little friend, who, I fear, must have forgotten me?" And, stooping slightly, he offered his hand to Clara. At first the little girl fixed her large dark eyes upon him with an expression of curiosity, then, suddenly recognizing him, she nodded her head prettily, and blew him a kiss from the tips of her thin fingers.

"Do you remember his highness, my child?" asked Clémence, of little Clara, who nodded an affirmative, and again blew a kiss to Rudolph.

"Her health seems improved since I last saw her," said he, in a tone of deep interest, addressing Clémence.

"She is certainly better, your highness; but she still suffers."

The marchioness and the prince, mutually embarrassed by the thought of the approaching conversation, would gladly have had it deferred for a few minutes by the presence of Clara, but the governess discreetly withdrew the little girl, and Rudolph and Clémence were left alone.

The armchair in which Lady d'Harville was reclining was placed beside the chimney-piece, against which Rudolph lightly leaned, as he stood opposite to her. Never had Clémence been more struck with the noble and prepossessing appearance of the prince, never had his voice sounded more gently or more sweetly. Feeling how painful it would be to the marchioness to begin the conversation, Rudolph said to her: "Madame, you have been the victim of disgraceful treachery: a cowardly accusation of Countess Sarah Macgregor had well-nigh ruined you."

"Can that be the truth?" cried Clémence. "My presentiments, then, have not deceived me! How did your highness discover this?"

"Last night, by a mere chance, at the ball of the Countess C——, I became aware of this atrocious plot. I was seated in a retired part of the winter-garden, when, unconscious that I was separated from them only by a clump of trees, Lady Macgregor and her brother talked plainly about their projects, and the snare that they had set for you. Anxious to apprise you of the peril that threatened you, I hurried to the ball of Madame de Nerval, hoping to meet you there, but you had not appeared. To write to you would only have been to incur the risk of my letter falling into the hands of the marquis, whose suspicions were already aroused. I preferred, therefore, to go and await your arrival at the house in the Rue du Temple, in order to baffle the treachery of the Countess Sarah. Allow me to hope you will pardon me for saying so much on a subject that must be distressing to you. Be assured, that but for the letter which you have had the kindness to write to me, never in my life would I have in any way reverted to the subject."

After a momentary silence, Lady d'Harville said: "There is but one way in which I can prove to your highness how grateful I am for your generosity—it is, to confess to you that which I have never revealed to human being. This confession will not, indeed, justify me in your estimation, but it will probably cause you to think my conduct somewhat less culpable than it appears."

"Frankly," said Rudolph, smiling, "my position towards your ladyship is very embarrassing."

Clémence, astonished at the almost jesting tone in which he spoke, looked at Rudolph with surprise, and said: "How so, your highness?"

"Owing to a circumstance you doubtless can guess, I am compelled somewhat to play the part of a near relative, touching an adventure which, as you have escaped the odious treachery of the Countess of Macgregor, does not deserve to be seriously looked at. But," continued Rudolph, with gentle and affectionate gravity, "your husband is almost the same to me as a brother; and before us, my father was devoted to his father by the most affectionate gratitude. It is therefore with all seriousness that I congratulate you upon having maintained the peace and security of your husband."

"And it is precisely because you honour Lord d'Harville with your friendship that I am so desirous to make your highness acquainted with the whole truth; above all, upon an *interest* which must seem to you as unworthy as it really is, and my conduct, which appears injurious towards him whom your highness calls 'almost a brother.'"

"Indeed, I shall always be proud and happy to receive even the slightest proof of your ladyship's confidence; yet you must permit me to say, as regards the *interest* of which you speak, that I am quite aware that you yielded fully as much to the sentiment of pity as to the ceaseless importunities of the Countess Sarah Macgregor, who had her own reasons for seeking your ruin. I also know that you hesitated long before you could summon resolution to take the step you now so deeply regret."

Clémence looked at the Prince with surprise.

"Does that surprise you? Well, in order that you may not fancy that I deal in witchcraft, I will tell you all about it some other day," continued Rudolph, smiling. "But is your husband completely tranquillized?"

"Yes, your highness," said Clémence, casting down her eyes in confusion, "and, indeed, it is painful to me to hear him asking pardon for having suspected me, and praising my modest silence respecting my charitable deeds."

"Nay, do not blame an illusion which renders him happy: on the contrary, do everything that you can to confirm him in the pleasant error. If it were not forbidden me to speak lightly of this adventure, and if your ladyship were not concerned, I should say, that never is a wife more charming to

her husband than when she has some failing to conceal. It is scarcely possible to form an idea of the coaxings and winning smiles that are elicited by a troubled conscience. When I was *young*," added Rudolph, with a smile, "I always experienced, despite of myself, a vague distrust at any extraordinary display of tenderness; and, for my own part, I can say that I never felt myself more amiable than when I needed forgiveness; so as soon as I perceived any one as perfidiously amiable towards me as I felt myself to be towards them, I was quite convinced that this delightful unanimity concealed some mutual deceit."

Lady d'Harville became more and more astonished to hear Rudolph speak so lightly of an adventure which might have involved such awful consequences to her; but quickly perceiving that the prince, beneath this affectation of levity, endeavoured to disguise the importance of the service he had rendered her, she felt deeply touched by his delicacy.

"I fully understand your highness's generous wish, and you are at liberty to jest, and forget the peril from which you have snatched me. But what I have now to say is so grave, so melancholy, so closely connected with the events of this morning, and your advice may be so useful to me, that I entreat you to remember that you have saved both my honour and my life—yes, my life! My husband was armed, and, in the excess of his repentance, he has confessed that he followed with the intention of killing me!"

"Great God!" exclaimed Rudolph, with deep emotion.

"He would have been justified in so doing," said Lady d'Harville, bitterly.

"I conjure your ladyship," said Rudolph, this time most seriously, "yes, I conjure you to believe me incapable of being indifferent to aught that concerns you. If I just now spoke somewhat lightly, I did so because I did not wish to add a greater weight to the melancholy occurrence this morning. But now I shall listen to your ladyship with a religious seriousness, as you are so good as to say that my advice may be of service to you."

"Oh! invaluable! But before I ask your highness's counsel, allow me to say a few words concerning a period when you did not know me—the years preceding my marriage with Lord d'Harville."

Rudolph bowed, and Clémence continued—

"At sixteen years of age I lost my mother——" said she, while an involuntary tear stole down her cheek. "I will not attempt to tell you how much I loved her. Imagine the perfection of kindness here on earth. Her fondness for me was extreme, and in it she appeared to find a sweet consolation for bitter griefs. Having but little inclination for society, of delicate health, and naturally very sedentary, her greatest delight was to take the sole charge of my education; and her various and solid knowledge qualified her for that self-imposed task far better than any hireling. Conceive the astonishment of my dear mother and myself when, in my sixteenth year, my education almost finished, my father, on the plea of my mother's weak health, announced to us that a young and accomplished widow, rendered most interesting by her great misfortunes, would take upon herself the duty of completing what my mother had commenced. At first she would not hear of my father's plan, and I entreated him not to allow a stranger to interpose between myself and my mother. He was inexorable, and, in spite of our tears, Madame Roland, widow of a colonel who died in India—as she said—took up her abode with us, and was entrusted with the duties and authority of governess to myself."

"What, the same Madame Roland whom your father married so soon after you gave your hand to Lord d'Harville."

"Yes, your highness."

"Was she very handsome?"

"Tolerably so, your highness."

"Very intellectual, then?"

"A talent for trickery and deceit—nothing more. At that time she was about five-and-twenty years of age, with very light hair, almost white eyelashes, and large eyes, of a very light blue; the expression of her countenance was mild, and even humble; her disposition cruelly perfidious, while her deportment was apparently submissive, even to baseness."

"And her education?"

"Worse than none, your highness; and I cannot comprehend how my father, till then a slave to conventionalities, could fail to perceive that the woman's glaring incapacity must shamefully betray the real object of her presence in his house. My mother pointed ont to him the utter ignorance of Madame Roland; he answered in a tone which forbade all reply, that, competent or otherwise, this young and interesting widow should keep the situation to which he had appointed her. I learned this subsequently. From that moment my poor mother's eyes were opened, and she was deeply affected; not so much deploring, I think, her husband's infidelity, as foreseeing the domestic unhappiness to which such a connection must lead, and the nature of which would probably reach my ears.

"But, looking only at his absurd passion, it seems to me that your father acted very unwisely in introducing this woman to his house."

"Your highness's astonishment would be the greater on that point, had you known the extreme formality and circumspection of his character: nothing could have led him thus to forget all the decencies of society but the irresistible influence of Madame Roland—an influence the more potent, because she disguised her designs under the pretence of a burning passion for him."

"But how old was your father at that time?"

"About sixty."

"And really believed in the love of that young woman for him?"

"My father was one of the most fashionable men of his day, and Madame Roland, prompted by her own instinct, or cunning advice——"

"Advice! Who then could advise her?"

"I shall presently explain that to your highness. Imagining that a man who had been renowned for his gallantry would now, in his old age, be the better pleased with flatteries bestowed upon his person, and the more credulously receive such compliments as served to recall to his mind the best days of his life, this woman—would you credit it, your highness?—flattered my father upon the gracefulness and attraction of his face, and the inimitable elegance of his figure—and he sixty years of age! Notwithstanding the excellent sense of my father was acknowledged to possess, he blindly fell into this clumsy snare. Such was, such still is, I doubt not, the secret of the influence of this woman. Really, despite my present sadness, I cannot refrain from smiling when I remember how often, before my marriage, I have heard Madame Roland assert and maintain, that what she called *real maturity* was the best period of life, and that this *maturity* scarcely commenced before fifty-five or sixty!"

"Your father's age?"

"Exactly so, your highness. Then only, said Madame Roland, do the intellect and the experience attain their full development; then only an eminent man could enjoy the consideration to which he was entitled from his position in society; then, too, the countenance of a man, and the gracefulness of his manners, attained their full perfection; the features, at this period of a man's life, presenting a rare commixture of gracious serenity and mild gravity. Then, a slight tinge of melancholy, caused by the deceptions discovered only by experience, completed the charm of *real maturity*: a charm only to be appreciated (Madame Roland hastened to add) by women of intellect as well as heart, who have the good taste to despise the bursts of youthful folly in wild young fellows of forty, whose character presents no security for their conduct, and whose insignificantly juvenile features were not as yet sublimed by that high expression, that majestic expression which proclaims the profound knowledge of life."

Rudolph could not refrain from smiling at the cutting irony with which Lady d'Harville sketched this portrait of her mother-in-law.

"There is one thing for which I can never pardon ridiculous people," said Rudolph to the marchioness.

"What is that, your highness?"

"Being also wicked; because one cannot then laugh at them freely."

"Perhaps they calculate upon that advantage," replied Clémence.

"I think it probable, though to be deplored. For instance, if I could forget that this Madame Roland's conduct has of necessity inflicted a vast amount of evil upon you, I should be vastly amused with her theory of *real maturity*, contrasted with the wild youth of mad boys of forty, who, according to her theory, would hardly be out of their pinafores—as our grandfathers and grandmothers would say."

"But what most excited my aversion was her odious conduct to my mother, and the fatally active part she took in bringing about my marriage," said Lady d'Harville, after a momentary hesitation.

Rudolph looked at her with surprise.

"Lord d'Harville is your highness's friend," resumed Clémence, in a firm voice. "I am perfectly aware of the grave importance of the words I have spoken; presently you will tell me about the justice of them. But I will return to Madame Roland, now established in our family as my governess, in spite of her manifest incapacity. On this subject my mother at length had a most painful altercation with my father, which drew down on us his extreme displeasure; and from that moment we lived in entire seclusion in our apartments, while Madame Roland directed the domestic affairs, and almost publicly did the honours of the house; always as my governess!"

"How cruelly must your mother have suffered!"

"Far more on my account than on her own, your highness; for she dreaded the future. Her health, already delicate, daily became weaker, and she gradually sunk into a severe illness. By a sad fatality, our family doctor, M. Sorbier, in whom my mother placed the highest confidence, died about this period, to her great regret. Madame Roland had, both as physician and friend, an Italian doctor, whose skill she highly extolled. Complying with her importunities, my deluded father, who had consulted him sometimes, and been satisfied with his treatment, proposed him to my mother, who, alas! raised no objection, and it was this man who attended her during her last illness." At these words, the eyes of Lady d'Harville filled with tears. "I blush to confess my weakness, your highness," added she; "but simply from this doctor having been introduced to my father by Madame Roland, he inspired me (and for no other reason then) with an involuntary dislike; and I saw, with painful apprehension, my mother transfer her confidence to him: nevertheless, with respect to skill, Doctor Polidori——"

"What say you, madame?" exclaimed Rudolph.

"Are you indisposed, my lord?" asked Lady d'Harville, astonished at the change in Rudolph's countenance.

"But no, it cannot be!" said the prince, as though communing with himself: "I am doubtless mistaken! Five or six years must

have elapsed since this took place, while I am told that it is not more than two years since Polidori came to Paris, concealed under a false name. It was certainly he whom I saw yesterday—the charlatan Bradamanti. Yet it is strange—two doctors of the same name!* What a singular coincidence! Madame, a few words respecting this Doctor Polidori, if you please," said Rudolph to Lady d'Harville, who gazed on him with increasing surprise "What was the age of this Italian?"

"About fifty years, I should suppose."

"And his appearance—his features?"

"Designing and sarcastic; I shall never forget his light-green eyes, and nose curved like an eagle's beak."

"'Tis he—'tis he himself!" cried Rudolph; "and do you think, madame, that this Doctor Polidori is still in Paris?"

"I do not know, your highness. About a year after my father's marriage he left this city. A lady of my acquaintance, who at this time also consulted this Italian as her physician—her Grace of Lucenay——"

"The Duchess de Lucenay!" again exclaimed Rudolph.

"Yes; but why does this astonish your highness?"

"Permit me to be silent on that point. But at the time of which you speak, what did her Grace of Lucenay say about this man?"

"That from the time of his departure from Paris, he wrote her some very clever letters upon the countries he passed through; for he was a great traveller. And now I remember, about a month ago, upon my asking her grace if she still received news of M. Polidori, she replied, with some embarrassment, that for a long time past nothing had been heard of him; that it was not known what had become of him, and that some persons even supposed him to be dead."

"That is strange!" said Rudolph, recalling to his mind the visit of the duchess to the charlatan Bradamanti.

"Does your highness know this man?"

"Yes, unhappily for me, I do. But pray continue your narrative; I may hereafter tell you something more of this Polidori."

"What! relating to this physician?"

"Rather say, to that wretch, polluted by the most atrocious crimes."

"Crimes!" cried the terrified Lady d'Harville; "then this man has committed crimes! he, the friend of Madame Roland, the medical adviser of my mother, who died under his treatment after a few days' illness! Oh, your highness, my presentiments have not deceived me!"

"Your presentiments?"

"Yes. I just now mentioned to you the involuntary dislike with which this man inspired me, on account of his having been introduced to the house by Madame Roland; but I did not tell your highness all."

"How so?"

"I was fearful lest I should accuse an innocent man, by yielding too far to the promptings of bitter grief; but now I feel justified in telling your highness everything. My mother lay dangerously ill for five days; during which time I watched her night and day. One evening I went to breathe the fresh air on the flat of our house: at the end of about a quarter of an hour I returned through a long and dark gallery. By a faint light which streamed from the door of Madame Roland's apartment, I saw Polidori quit the room. That lady accompanied him. Being in the shadow, they did not perceive me. Madame Roland spoke a few words in a very low tone of voice, which I could not distinctly hear. The doctor, in a much louder tone, replied only, '*The day after to-morrow.*' And as Madame Roland again whispered something to him, he repeated, with singular emphasis, 'The day after to-morrow, I tell you—the day after to-morrow.'"

"What could be the meaning of these words?"

"What could they mean? It was on Wednesday evening I heard Polidori say, '*The day after to-morrow.*' Friday came—my mother was dead!"

"Oh, this is horrible!"

"After this mournful event I was sent to stay with a lady relation, who, forgetful of the reserve which my tender age should have imposed upon her, told me what powerful reasons there were for my hating Madame Roland, and enlightened me as to the ambitious hopes entertained by this woman. Then did I first fully conceive all my poor mother must have suffered. The first time I again saw my father I thought my heart would burst; he came to take me into Normandy, where we were to pass the first period of our mourning. During the journey he informed me, without the least preface, and as though it had been the most natural thing in the world, that out of regard for himself and me, Madame Roland had kindly consented to take the management of his establishment, and to act as my guide and friend."

"On arriving at Aubiers (so was my father's estate called), the first person who met us was Madame Roland. She had established herself here on the day of my mother's death. Spite of her humble, gentle manner, her countenance betrayed ill-disguised triumph. Never shall I forget the look, at once sarcastic and spiteful, with which she received me; it seemed to say, 'I am mistress here—you are the guest.' A fresh grief was in store for me. Whether from an inexcusable want of correct feeling, or shameless impudence, this woman occupied the apartment which had been my mother's; in my indignation I complained to my father of this unfeeling impropriety. He answered me se-

* We must remind the reader that Polidori was a doctor of some eminence when he undertook Rudolph's education.

verely, saying that it was needless for me either to feel or express surprise on the subject, as it was his desire I should habituate myself to look upon and respect Madame Roland as a second mother. I replied, that it would be a profanation of that sacred name to act as he commanded. To his extreme wrath, I never allowed any opportunity to escape by which I could exhibit my deeply-rooted aversion to Madame Roland; and many times in the excess of his anger he bitterly reprimanded me in the presence of that woman. He reproached my ingratitude and coldness towards an angel of consolation, sent to *us* by Providence. 'Let me beg of you to speak for yourself alone, my father, retorted I, one day. He treated me harshly for this speech, but Madame Roland, with the honeyed words of hypocrisy, artfully interceded for me: 'Pray, be indulgent to Clémence,' said she: 'the sorrows she endures for the excellent parent we all so deeply deplore, is so natural, so laudable, that you should respect her grief, and pity her even for her unjust suspicions.' 'There!' exclaimed my father, pointing with admiration to Madame Roland; 'do you hear her? what goodness! what generosity! Instantly entreat her pardon for your unworthy conduct.' 'The spirit of my beloved mother hears and sees me from on high,' said I, to my father; 'she would never pardon such baseness in her child!' and, with grief and mortification, I quitted the room, leaving my father to console Madame Roland, and dry her hypocritical tears. Pardon me for dwelling so long upon these trivial details; but thus alone can I accurately convey to your highness an idea of the life I at that time led."

"I can almost fancy myself present at these domestic scenes, so sad and yet so true. In how many families have they been repeated, and will be again and again! But in what capacity did your father introduce Madame Roland to the neighbourhood?"

"As my governess and his friend—and she was received accordingly."

"I need not ask you whether he lived in the same isolated state."

"With the exception of some few unfrequent visits which circumstances or business rendered unavoidable, we saw no one. My father, governed by his passion, and doubtless influenced by Madame Roland, threw off his mourning for my mother after having worn it scarcely three months, under the pretext that the only true mourning was the mourning of the heart. His behaviour toward me daily became colder, while his indifference allowed me a degree of liberty almost incredible in a person of my age. I saw him at breakfast, after which he retired with Madame Roland, who acted as secretary in his correspondence; then they either walked or drove out together, returning only an hour before dinner. To this occasion Madame Roland devoted a careful and charming preparation at her toilet; while my poor father dressed himself with an extravagance of style strangely unsuited to his time of life. Sometimes, after dinner, he received a few persons he could not decently avoid asking to his house; on which occasions he would play at backgammon with Madame Roland until ten o'clock, when he would offer his arm to conduct her to my mother's apartment, and withdraw. As for myself, the whole day was at my disposal; to take long rides, attended by a servant, or to wander at my will in the woods surrounding the house; and when, as sometimes happened, I felt my spirits too depressed to appear at the breakfast table, not the slightest inquiry was ever made after me by my father."

"What strange forgetfulness!—what cruel abandonment!"

"Having several times accidentally encountered one of the neighbouring gentlemen in the woods where I usually rode on horseback, I renounced these rambles, and confined myself entirely to the park."

"But how did this infamous woman conduct herself towards you when alone with you?"

"As much as I, she shunned such meetings. Once, however, we were unexpectedly alone together, and alluding to some severe words I had spoken the preceding evening, she said, coldly, 'Have a care: you would fain contend against my power; you will be crushed!' 'Like my mother?' said I, bitterly: 'it is a pity, madame, you have not M. Polidori by your side, to assure you that your vengeance shall be satiated—*the day after to-morrow!*'"

"What reply did she make when you recalled those fearful words of Polidori?"

"At first she changed colour, then conquering her emotion, she angrily demanded what I meant by those words. 'When alone, ask yourself, madame,' answered I; 'your conscience will give the reply. Shortly after that a scene occurred which may be said to have decided my fate. Among a number of family portraits which graced the walls of the parlour, in which we usually passed the evening, was that of my mother. One day I observed that this portrait had been removed. Two neighbours had dined with us; one of them, M. Dorval, a country scrivener, had always expressed the utmost respect for my mother. When we reached the withdrawing-room, I said to my father, 'Why is my mother's portrait removed?' 'The sight of that portrait caused me too much pain,' replied my father, in an embarrassed tone; and with a gesture he directed my attention to the fact of strangers being present. 'Where is the portrait now, father?' asked I. Turning with a gesture of impatience, he looked at Madame Roland, and said, 'Where has that portrait been put?' 'In the lumber-room,' replied she, at the same time casting a look of defiance at me, evidently supposing that

the presence of our visitors would prevent me from making any further observation. She was mistaken, for I indignantly replied, 'I can easily conceive, madame, that the memory of my mother must be painful to you, but that is scarcely sufficient reason for banishing to a garret the portrait of a woman who, when *you* were in want and misery, charitably permitted you to eat her bread.'"

"Excellent!" said Rudolph. "Your icy contempt must have been crushing to her."

"'Mademoiselle!' exclaimed my father, 'you forget that this lady has watched, and still continues to watch, with maternal solicitude over your education; you seem also to have lost all recollection of the respect and esteem I entertain for her. And since you so far forget yourself as to assail her before strangers, I tell you—yes, *I*, that the charge of ingratitude lies at the door of her who, overlooking the tender care and attention she has received, presumes to reproach a person deserving of interest and respect with misfortunes nobly sustained.' 'I will not permit myself to discuss the question with you, my dear father,' said I, submissively. 'Perhaps then, mademoiselle, you will favour me with that preference!' cried Madame Roland, carried away by rage beyond the bounds of her usual prudence—'perhaps you will permit me to assert that, so far from owing the slightest gratitude to your mother, I have nothing to remember but the aversion she invariably manifested towards me; for it was not with her goodwill that I resided under this roof.' 'Stay, madame!' said I, interrupting her, 'out of respect to my father, if not in mercy to yourself, refrain from these shameful confessions, or you will make even me regret having exposed you to such humiliating disclosures.'"

"Better and better!" cried Rudolph; "this was a death sentence! And this woman?"

"By a very vulgar though convenient expedient, Madame Roland contrived to put an end to this conversation. With a loud scream she threw herself in a chair, and very naturally feigned a swoon. Thanks to this incident, the two witnesses of this scene quitted the room on pretence of going for assistance, and I followed their example, leaving my father hanging in the fondest anxiety over Madame Roland."

"I can imagine your father's rage on your next interview!"

"He came to my apartment next morning, and said to me, 'In order to prevent a recurrence of such disgraceful scenes as that of yesterday, I have to inform you that, as soon as the prescribed time of *our* mourning shall have expired, it is my intention to marry Madame Roland. You will then be compelled to treat her with the respect due to my *wife*. For certain private reasons, it is expedient you should marry before me: your mother's fortune, amounting to more than a million of francs, will be your portion. From this day, I shall take the necessary steps to form a suitable match for you from among the various proposals I have received for your hand. After this conversation, I lived more alone than ever, never meeting my father except at meals, which usually passed in melancholy silence. So dull and lonely was my life, that I only waited for my father to propose any suitor he might decide on, to accept him for my husband. Madame Roland, having abandoned all her ill-natured remarks about my deceased parent, avenged herself by inflicting on me the continual pain of seeing her appropriate to herself the various articles that had belonged to my mother. Her easy chair, her embroidery-frame, the books which composed her private library, even to a screen I myself had embroidered for her, and in the centre of which were her initials. This woman profaned them all."

"Oh! I can well conceive the horror such desecration caused you."

"Still, great as were my sufferings, my lonely, isolated state rendered them more acute."

"And had you no one in whom you could confide?"

"No one; but I received one proof of interest on my behalf, which affected me much, and which should have opened my eyes to the future which was preparing for me. One of the two witnesses of the scene in which I had so unceremoniously treated Madame Roland, was M. Dorval, a worthy old notary, to whom my mother had rendered many services. After my father's prohibition, I never entered the drawing-room when strangers were there; I had not, consequently, seen M. Dorval for some time, when great was my surprise to see him coming towards me one day in the park, while taking my accustomed walk. 'Mademoiselle,' said he to me, 'I am fearful of being observed by the count, your father; read this letter, and destroy it immediately—its contents are most important to you.' So saying, he disappeared suddenly. In this letter he informed me that it was in contemplation to marry me to the Marquis d'Harville: that the match appeared in every respect eligible, inasmuch as all who knew him concurred in bearing testimony to the many excellent qualities of Lord d'Harville, who was young, rich, good-looking, and highly distinguished for his talents and mental attainments: yet that successively, the families of two young ladies, with whom he had been on the point of marriage, had abruptly broken off the marriage negociations. The notary added, that although he could not inform me the cause of these ruptures, he still considered it his duty to apprise me of them, without at all insinuating that they originated in any circumstance that was in the slightest degree discreditable to Lord d'Harville. The two young ladies alluded to

were, one, the daughter of Lord Beauregard, a peer of France; the other, of Lord Dudley. M. Dorval concluded by saying, that he was induced to make this communication to me, because my father, in his pressing anxiety to conclude the marriage, did not appear to attach sufficient importance to the circumstances now detailed."

"Indeed," said Rudolph, after a few moments' reflection, "I remember that your husband, within the interval of a year, wrote to me of two successive matches which had been broken off just as all arrangements had appeared to be concluded, and ascribing their abrupt termination to a difficulty in arranging matters of a mere monetary nature."

Lady d'Harville smiled bitterly, and replied: "Your highness shall know the truth of that presently. After reading the old notary's letter, I felt equal anxiety and curiosity. Who was Lord d'Harville? My father had never mentioned him to me; it was in vain that I racked my memory—I could not even recollect the name. Soon after this, Madame Roland, to my great astonishment, set out for Paris. Her journey was only to occupy a week at most, yet my father felt the deepest grief at this temporary separation; his temper became more sour than ever, and he increased in coolness of manner towards me. One day, when I asked him how he was, he even went so far as to reply: 'I am ill, and it is owing to you that I am so!' 'To me, father?' I exclaimed. 'Yes, certainly. You know how much I am accustomed to the society of Madame Roland, and that excellent woman, whom you have so much outraged, has left me to undertake her present journey solely on your account.' This mark of Madame Rowland's *interest* alarmed me; I felt a vague presentiment that her journey had reference to my marriage. I will leave your highness to fancy the joy of my father on the return of my future step-mother. The next day he sent to desire my company: I found him alone with her. 'I have,' said he, 'for some time past been reflecting on the necessity of settling you. Your mourning will terminate in another month. To-morrow I expect a visit from the Marquis d'Harville, a distinguished and very wealthy young man; one who is in every way calculated to make you happy. He has seen you in company, and is desirous of being united to you; all pecuniary matters are brought to a satisfactory conclusion, and it therefore entirely depends upon yourself whether you will be married within the ensuing six weeks. If, on the contrary, by some caprice which I cannot foresee, you think fit to refuse this almost unhoped-for and excellent match, I shall in no respect defer my intention of marrying so soon as I am out of mourning. In this latter case, I feel bound to tell you, your presence in my house will only be agreeable to me on condition of your solemnly promising to observe towards *my wife* that respect and tenderness which she so highly merits!' 'I understand you, my father,' replied I; 'if I do not accept Lord d'Harville, you will marry all the same, and then it will not be inconvenient for you and madame, if I retire to the Convent of the Sacred Heart?' 'Not at all,' replied my father, coldly."

"Oh, that was more than *weakness;* it was cruelty!" exclaimed Rudolph.

"Do you know, your highness, what always prevented me from feeling resentment against my father? I had a sort of presentiment that one day or another he would pay—alas! but too dearly—for his blind passion for Madame Roland. God be praised, that day has yet to come!"

"And did you say nothing to him about what the old notary had informed you, as to the two marriages Lord d'Harville had been on the point of contracting, which were so abruptly broken off by the respective families?"

"Yes, your highness. That very day I entreated my father to grant me a few moments' private conversation; upon which Madame Roland rose, and abruptly left the room. 'I feel no aversion to the union you propose for me, father,' said I, 'only I have heard that Lord d'Harville has twice before been on the point of marriage——' 'Well, well,' replied he, interrupting me; 'I know all about that. Those marriages were broken off in consequence of disagreements in pecuniary matters; and in those disputes, moreover, Lord d'Harville showed the utmost possible delicacy. If you have no other objection, you may consider the match as decided on, and look upon yourself as married; for, in giving you in marriage, I have nothing in view but your happiness.'"

"No doubt, Madame Roland was delighted with this union?"

"Delighted! Oh, yes, your highness," replied Clémence, bitterly, "delighted, indeed; for this union was of her own planning. It was she who gave my father the first idea of it. She well knew the *real* cause of the breaking off of the two former matches by Lord d'Harville, and that was precisely the reason why she was so anxious that I should become his wife."

"But with what motive?"

"She sought to be revenged on me by devoting me to a most frightful fate."

"But your father——"

"Deceived by Madame Roland, he really believed that pecuniary motives alone had been the cause of baffling Lord d'Harville's hopes."

"What a dreadful plot! But what, then, was this mysterious reason?"

"I will tell you, presently, my lord. Lord d'Harville arrived at Aubiers. His manners, his mind, his countenance, all pleased me: his address was good, his disposition amiable and mild, though rather melancholy. I remarked in him a contrast which at once asto-

nished and pleased me: his mind was highly cultivated, his fortune was princely, and his birth illustrious; yet there were times when his physiognomy, ordinarily resolute and energetic, expressed an almost timid apprehension, as though he feared even his own self; this greatly interested me. I took much pleasure in remarking the delightful kindness with which he constantly behaved to an old valet, who had lived with him from his childhood, and whom alone he would allow to attend on him. Shortly after his arrival, Lord d'Harville remained in his own apartments for two days; my father desired to see him, but the old servant denied him admission, on the plea that Lord d'Harville had so violent a headache, that he could receive no one. When Lord d'Harville left his chamber, he appeared to me very pale, and much changed; subsequently he always displayed impatience, almost distress, whenever this temporary illness was mentioned to him. As I became more intimate with Lord d'Harville, I discovered new qualities in him which awakened my sympathy. He had so many reasons to be happy, that I felt pleased with him for the modesty with which he enjoyed his advantages. The day for our marriage being fixed, he anticipated or met my slightest wishes in all the projects we formed for the future; and if, at any time I questioned him on his melancholy, he spoke to me of his parents, who would have been so proud and happy to see him married so completely according to his heart and his taste, that I could not, with good grace, refuse to admit of reasons so flattering to myself. Lord d'Harville guessed the terms on which I had recently lived with Madame Roland and my father, although the latter, pleased with my approaching marriage, which forwarded his own, hadagain become exceedingly kind to me. In some of our conversations, Lord d'Harville, with great tact and good feeling, hinted to me that, perhaps, he loved me all the more on account of my past sorrows. I thought it my duty, while we were upon this subject, to inform him of my father's intention to marry again; and as I pointed out to him the difference this would make as to my fortune, he would not allow me to proceed, and perfectly convinced me of his noble disinterestedness in seeking my hand. I could not but think that the families who had so abruptly broken off his former projected alliances, must have been very sordid or unreasonable, to make any difficulty with one so generous and easy as Lord d'Harville."

"This is what I have always observed in him," said Rudolph; I have ever found him full of generosity, devotedness, and delicacy. But did you never speak to him respecting his two previous matrimonial disappointments?"

"I must confess to your highness, that seeing him so kind and considerate, the question often rose to my lips, but as often, the very fear of wounding his kindness and frankness, prevented me from opening the subject. The nearer the day fixed for our marriage approached, the more happy Lord d'Harville professed himself to be; and yet I two or three times saw him overwhelmed with profound grief. One day, in particular, he fixed his eyes upon me, actually filled with tears; and he seemed so overcome, that one would have supposed that he wished, yet dared not, disclose to me some important secret. The remembrance of the two former broken matches recurred to my mind, and I must confess that I felt some alarm. A secret misgiving warned me that the happiness of my whole life was at stake—perhaps perilled for ever! But then, again, I was so anxious to quit my father's house, that I stifled all my fears."

"And did Lord d'Harville confide nothing to you?"

"Nothing; when I asked him the cause of his melancholy, he replied: 'Forgive me, but I am happy in a sad way.' These words, pronounced in a tone of tenderness, somewhat reassured me. And then, how could I possibly, at the very moment when his eyes swam in tears, be so cruel as to show any suspicion with reference to the past? Lord d'Harville's witnesses to the marriage contract, M. de Lucenay and M. de Saint-Remy, arrived at Aubiers a few days previous to my marriage, to which only my nearest relations were invited. Immediately after the ceremony we set out for Paris. I had experienced no love for Lord d'Harville, but I felt interested in him, and his character inspired me with esteem; but for the events which followed this fatal marriage, a still more tender sentiment would doubtless have attached me to him. We were married——"

At these words, Lady d'Harville turned pale, and, for an instant, her resolution seemed to have abandoned her. After a short pause she continued:

"Directly after my marriage, my father tenderly embraced me, as did also Madame Roland. In the presence of so large a company, I could not avoid this fresh display of hypocrisy: with her dry, white hand, she wrung rather than pressed mine, as she whispered in my ear, in her perfidiously honeyed tone, these words, which, to my dying hour, I shall never forget: 'Think of me sometimes in the height of your happiness, *for I effected your marriage*.' Alas! I was far then from comprehending the full force of those words. Our marriage was celebrated at eleven o'clock; soon after we entered our carriage, followed by my maid and Lord d'Harville's aged valet; and we travelled so rapidly, that we reached Paris at ten at night. I should have been astonished at the silence and melancholy of Lord d'Harville, had I not known that his was what he termed a *melancholy happiness*. For my own part, I was painfully affected; I was returning to Paris for the first

time since the death of my mother; I was about to re-enter it with my husband, whom I had known scarcely six weeks, and who, up to the previous evening, had never addressed me but with the most respectful formality. Perhaps sufficient consideration is not given to the fear that women experience at the sudden change of tone and manner which the best-bred men allow themselves as soon as we belong to them; they do not reflect that the young wife cannot in a few hours forget the timidity and the scruples of the youthful maiden. Nothing has ever appeared to me more barbarous than this custom of carrying off a young bride as soon as the marriage ceremony is over—as though she were a prey, while, it seems, marriage should be the conservation of the right to employ all loving resources, all affectionate charms, to make each beloved. You will imagine, my lord, the sinking of the heart, the indefinable fear with which I re-entered Paris—that city in which I had lost my mother barely a year before. We arrived at d'Harville House——"

The emotion of the lady redoubled; her cheeks were covered with burning blushes, and in a voice of agony she added: "But you must—you shall know all—yes, all; otherwise I shall appear despicable in your eyes. Well, then," she resumed, with desperate resolution, "I was conducted to the apartment destined for me, and left there by myself. In about an hour Lord d'Harville joined me. Notwithstanding his protestations of tenderness, I felt ready to die with fright; my sobs half choked me—but I was his, and it was necessary that I should resign myself. But soon my husband, uttering a terrible cry, seized my arm hard enough to break it! I endeavoured to release myself from his iron grasp; I implored him to have mercy upon me—he did not even hear me! His countenance was distorted by the most frightful convulsions; his eyes rolled in their orbits with a rapidity which fascinated me; his mouth was contorted, and filled with bloody foam; his hand still maintained its grasp! I made a desperate effort; his stiffened fingers at length relaxed their hold, and I fell fainting to the floor at the moment when Lord d'Harville was struggling in the paroxysm of this horrible attack! Such was my wedding-night—such was the vengeance of Madame Roland!"

"Unfortunate woman!" said Rudolph, in a tone of the deepest sympathy. "I understand it all—your husband is epileptic! Oh, it is indeed frightful!"

"Nor is that all," added Clémence, in a voice trembling with agony: "Oh, be that fatal night for ever cursed! My daughter, my angelic child, has inherited that frightful malady!"

"Your daughter, too! What! her pallor—her weakness——"

"Springs from the same cause. The physicians declare it to be incurable, because it is hereditary!"

Lady d'Harville covered her face with her hands; overwhelmed by this sad revelation, she had not courage to add another word. Rudolph also remained mute. His mind recoiled affrighted before the horrible mysteries of that wedding-night.

He pictured to himself this young lady, already so saddened by her return to the city in which her mother had died, arriving in that strange house alone with a man for whom she felt interest and esteem, but not love—nought of that love which so delightfully disturbs and intoxicates, and makes the young wife forget her chaste alarm in the rapture of a legitimate and reciprocal passion. No, no; on the contrary, trembling with modest terror, poor Clémence arrived there—sad, cold, with a sinking heart—her brow burning with blushes, her eyes bathed in tears. She resigned herself to duty, to necessity; and then, instead of hearing words of gratitude, of love, and of tenderness, to recompense her for the happiness she had bestowed, she sees convulsed at her feet a man utterly senseless, who writhes, foams, and howls in the hideous convulsions of one of the most fearful visitations with which a man can be incurably stricken! And that is not all. Her child, poor innocent little angel, is also withered from her birth!

These painful and distressing confessions awakened in Rudolph's mind some very serious reflections. "Such," thought he, "is the law of the land. A girl, lovely and pure, gentle and confiding, the victim of a fatal deceit, unites her destiny to that of a man who is subject to an awful disease—a fatal heritage, which he transmits to his children! The unfortunate wife who discovers this horrible mystery, what remedy has she?—None! None but to suffer and weep, and struggle against her disgust and terror: none, but to pass her days in never-ending agony and alarm; none, perchance, but seek guilty consolation beyond the desolate existence to which she has been doomed! In these laws the very brutes seem altogether superior to man—by the cares bestowed upon them, by the improvements sought to be made in them, by the protection which surrounds, by the guarantees which secure them. Purchase an animal, and should an unforeseen disorder exhibit itself in that animal after the purchase, the sale is void. What disgrace, what an outrage on the rights of property it would be, to compel a man to keep a coughing, lame, or a spavined horse! Yes, that would be a scandal, a crime, a shameful state of things! Only fancy what it must be to be compelled to keep through life a mule that coughs, a horse that roars, or an ass that is dead lame! What frightful consequences might this not produce to the whole human race! Therefore, in such cases, agreement, contract, purchase, sale—are all set aside; the all-powerful law undoes all that has been done.

"But let the question concern a creature

made after the image of God—let it concern a confiding, virtuous girl, who, in her innocent trust in the honour of man, has become united to him, and awakens to find herself the companion of an epileptic wretch, one who is stricken with some terrible disease, of which the moral and physical consequences are terrible to contemplate: a malady which may throw disorder and hatred into a family, perpetuate a horrible disease, vitiate generations —oh! then this law, so inexorable about diseased animals, so admirably provident, that it wills not that a blemished horse shall be fit for propagation—this law carefully abstains from unbinding the unhappy girl who is the victim of such a union! The bonds of marriage are indissoluble; to break them would be to offend both God and man! In truth," continued Rudolph, "man sometimes displays a very disgraceful humility, and an egotism of pride that is downright execrable. He values himself at less than the beasts, in heaping upon them the securities which he refuses to himself; and imposes, perpetuates, and consecrates his own most dreadful diseases, by putting them under the safeguard of the immutability of laws human and divine."

Rudolph attached considerable blame to Lord d'Harville, but he resolved that he would endeavour to make some excuse for him in the eyes of Clémence, although he could not conceal from himself, after her sad recital, that the marquis had for ever lost her love. From thought to thought, Rudolph said to himself, "By duty I have estranged myself from a woman whom I love, and who, perhaps, feels a secret preference for me. Either from a yearning heart or from pity, she has nearly lost her honour—nay, her very life, for an arrant fool whom she fancied miserable. If, instead of estranging myself from her, I had shown my care, my respect, my love—my reserve might have been such that not the slightest breath of calumny should have tainted her reputation—her husband's suspicions never would have been excited; while now she is almost at the mercy of such an ass as M. Charles Robert; and he, I fear, will be much more indiscreet in proportion as he has the less right to be so. And, again, who knows whether, despite the dangers she has risked, Lady d'Harville's heart may always remain free? All reconciliation with her husband is from this time impossible. Young, lovely, surrounded by the gay, and sympathizing with all who suffer, with what dangers, what pitfalls is her path surrounded! For Lord d'Harville, what sorrow, what anguish of the mind! Jealous of his wife, who cannot subdue the disgust and terror which he excited in her the first dreadful night of their union—what a fate is his!"

Clémence, her forehead resting on her hand, her eyes moist, her cheek burning with blushes, shunned the gaze of Rudolph, so much had this disclosure cost her.

"Now," resumed Rudolph, after a long silence, "I understand the cause of Lord d'Harville's sadness—a grief which hitherto I have been unable to divine. I can imagine his regret——"

"His regret!" exclaimed Clémence; "say, rather, his remorse, your highness—if he can feel any—for never was a crime more deliberately planned."

"A crime, madam?"

"And what else is it, to unite yourself, by indissoluble ties, to a girl who relies on your honour, when you yourself know that a disease which inspires dread and horror has fatally seized you? What else is it, to devote a wretched child to similar misery? Who compelled M. d'Harville thus to make two victims?—a blind, insensate passion? No; my birth, my fortune, my person suited his taste. He wished to effect a suitable match, because he was, doubtless, tired of a bachelor's life."

"Madame, have some pity, at least."

"Pity! Tell me who deserves pity but my daughter? Miserable victim of this odious marriage, what nights and days have I passed by her side! what bitter tears have her sufferings wrung from my eyes!"

"But her father has to bear the same unmerited sufferings."

"But her father condemned her to an infancy of misery, to a withering youth; and, if she survive, to a life of loneliness and sorrow; for she shall never marry. No! I love her too much to expose her hereafter to weep over her own offspring, for ever stricken, as I weep over her. I have suffered too much from her father's treachery, to become an accomplice to a like treason."

"You are right; the revenge of your mother-in-law is horrible. But, patience; perhaps the time will come when you in turn may be revenged," said Rudolph, after a moment's reflection.

"What says your highness?" inquired Clémence, astonished at the tone in which he spoke.

"I have rarely missed the satisfaction of seeing the wicked punished—cruelly punished for their crimes," added he, with a vehemence that made Clémence start. "But what said your husband on the day which succeeded this unhappy night?"

"He confessed, with a strange ingenuousness, that those families whose alliance he had sought, had discovered his malady, and each projected union had been cancelled. Thus, having twice been rejected, he had still the heartlessness——oh, that was vile; —yet, such is one whom the world calls a gentleman—a man of honour!"

"You, always so good, are now indeed cruel."

"I am cruel, because I have been cruelly deceived. Lord d'Harville knew me to be compassionate; why did he not candidly tell me the whole truth, and throw himself on my kindness and generosity?"

"You would have refused him."

"Your words condemn him, your highness; his conduct was vilely treacherous, if he had that fear."

"But if he loved you——?"

"If he loved me, should he have sacrificed me to his selfishness? Good heaven!—so wretched was my position at the time, and such my desire to quit my paternal roof, that if he had been frank with me, I know not but that I should have been moved by his terrible disclosure—by the loneliness to which a frightful and fatal destiny had doomed him. Yes, seeing him at once so ingenuous and so unhappy, I could not have had the courage to have rejected him; and if I had thus bound myself by a sacred vow to meet the consequences of my devotion, I would willingly have kept my oath. But to wish to enforce my esteem and pity by first making me dependent on him—to exact that pity from my duty as a wife to him who, as a man of honour, has sacrificed his own duty, is both folly and meanness. Now, your highness, be the judge of my life, of the gross deception of which I am the victim. I had faith in the honour of Lord d'Harville, and he has basely deceived me. His melancholy, his mild and retiring manner interested me; and yet this melancholy, which he attributed to pious recollections, was caused by the consciousness of his incurable infirmity."

"But yet, even though he were to you a stranger—nay, an enemy—the sight of his sufferings should awake your commiseration; your heart is noble and generous."

"But can I calm those sufferings? If he could distinguish my voice—if only a look of recognition answered my sorrowing glance! But, no! Oh, you know not how frightful are these paroxysms—when a man is overwhelmed with savage fury—when he sees, hears, feels nothing, and only recovers from this frenzy to become sullen and morose. When my child sinks beneath one of these attacks, what can I do but indulge my grief? My heart is torn, and I kiss while I bathe with tears her poor little arms stiffened and distorted by the convulsions which are destroying her. But she is my child, my own child! Oh! when I see her suffer thus, I am tempted, in the bitterness of my spirit, to curse the author of her calamities. When my child's sufferings cease, then my irritation against my husband subsides; then, yes, then I pity him—then the tenderness of my heart makes aversion give place to a feeling of painful commiseration for him. Yet this is the question which at last arises: Was I married at seventeen to feel nothing but these alternations of hate and of painful pity—to weep over a wretched child whom I may not rear? Speaking of my child, allow me, your highness, to anticipate a reproach which, doubtless, I deserve, and which you, perhaps, would be unwilling to cast on me. She is so interesting that she ought sufficiently to occupy my heart, for I love her passionately; yet this wounded affection is mixed with so much present bitterness, with so much fear for the future, that my tenderness for my daughter always resolves itself into tears. When with her, my heart is bruised, tortured, despairing; for I am powerless in overcoming a disease pronounced incurable. Thus it was, in the hope of escaping the atmosphere of wretchedness which surrounds me, that I took refuge in the sinful dream of an attachment which—Alas! I was deceived, basely deceived; I confess my fault; and I fall back into the mournful existence to which my husband has doomed me. But tell me, your highness, was this the life I had a right to expect? Am I alone guilty of the injuries which Lord d'Harville would this morning have made me pay with my life? These faults are great, I admit; and the greater as I have so much reason to blush for my choice. Happily for me, the conversation your highness overheard between the countess and her brother, on the subject of M. Charles Robert, saves me from the shame I should otherwise feel in making this new avowal; but I hope, at least, that I now seem to deserve as much pity as blame."

"I cannot express to your ladyship how much your recital has moved me. From the death of your mother till the birth of your daughter, what devouring griefs, what hidden sorrows have you not endured! You—so brilliant, so admired, so envied!"

"Oh! believe me, your highness, when one is suffering under misfortunes, it is frightful to hear the words openly expressed: 'How happy she is!'"

"Indeed, nothing is more painful; but you are not the only one who suffers from the cruel contrast of what is, and what appears to be."

"How so, your highness?"

"In the eyes of all your husband ought to appear still more happy than you do, since he possesses you; yet is he not also much to be pitied? Can there be in the world an existence more wretched than his? His wrongs towards you are great, but is he not frightfully punished? He loves you as you deserve to be loved, and he knows that for him you can only entertain an insurmountable aversion. In his suffering, sickly child he sees an incessant reproach; nor is this all, jealousy steps in to torture him."

"How can I protect him against that? By not giving him occasion to be jealous, will be your highness's answer; and I admit its truth. But because my heart is unpossessed by another, will it the more be his? He knows it cannot. Since the frightful scene I have related to you, we have lived entirely apart; but in the eyes of the world, I show him the respect which usage demands. To you alone, your highness, have I ever breathed a syllable of this fatal secret; thus, therefore, I venture to ask counsel of you which I could not solicit from any other human being."

"And I assure you, madame, if the service

I have rendered you merits a recompense, I consider myself a thousand times repaid by your confidence. But since you desire my advice, and will permit me to speak to you frankly——"

"Oh, I implore you to do so!"

"Let me tell you then, that, for want of well employing one of your most valuable qualities, you lose great enjoyments, which would not only fill up the void of your heart, but would divert you from your domestic griefs, and effectually supply that want of lively and poignant emotions, and," said the prince, smiling, "I dare almost venture to add (pardon me for my bad opinion of your sex), that natural taste for mystery and intrigue which exercises so mighty an influence over most women."

"What is it your highness implies?"

"I would tell you that, if you desire to *amuse yourself* by doing good, there is nothing that could more highly please or interest you."

Lady d'Harville looked at Rudolph with astonishment.

"And understand," continued he, "that I do not speak of indiscriminately sending, almost with disdain, liberal alms to unfortunate creatures of whom you know nothing, and who often do not deserve your kindness; but if you would *amuse* yourself, as I do, in occasionally playing the part of an inferior *Providence*, you would confess that *good deeds* have sometimes all the piquancy of romance."

"I must confess it has never occurred to me to consider charity from the *amusing* point of view," said Clémence, smiling in her turn.

"It is a discovery I owe to my horror of wearisome conventionalities: a disgust with which my political conferences with my ministers has inspired me. But to return to our *amusing* benevolence. I have not, alas! the virtue of those disinterested persons who confide to others the care of distributing their alms. If it required simply to send one of my chamberlains to carry some hundreds of louis to each ward of Paris, I confess, to my shame, the scheme would not interest me; whilst to do good, as I think it ought to be done, is the most *amusing* thing in the world. I adopt this word, because to me it expresses all that pleases, all that charms, all that attracts. And really, if your ladyship would become my accomplice in some *dark intrigues* of this nature, you would see, I repeat, that, setting aside the praiseworthiness of the deed, nothing is more exquisite, more engaging, more attractive, and frequently more diverting, than these charitable adventures. And, then, what mystery is requisite to hide one's benevolence! what precautions we take not to be known! what varied and powerful emotions are excited at the sight of poor and worthy people crying with joy, as they invoke blessings upon you! Depend on it, such a spectacle is more gratifying than the angry countenance of a jealous or an unfaithful lover—and they are nearly all so in turn. Indeed, the emotions of which I am speaking resemble very nearly those you experienced this morning in going to the Rue du Temple. Simply dressed, to avoid being remarked, you would leave your home with a beating heart, you would also enter with uneasiness some humble coach, the blinds of which you would let down, that you might not be seen; then, casting your eyes from side to side, fearful of surprise, you would stealthily enter some house of wretched appearance—as you did this morning; the only difference is, that you would say: 'If I am discovered, I am lost;' and in the other you will say: 'If I am discovered, I shall be blessed.' But as modesty is one of your many amiable qualities, you would make use of the most perfidious expedients, the most diabolical contrivances, rather than be blessed!"

"Oh!" cried Lady d'Harville, with tenderness, "your highness has saved me! I cannot express the novel ideas, the consoling hopes, your words awaken within me! You say, truly, to occupy the heart and mind in making those who suffer adore you, is almost to love! When I compare the existence now opening upon my view with that to which a shameful error might have doomed me for ever, the reproaches I heap on myself become yet more bitter."

"I should indeed be distressed," rejoined Rudolph, smiling, "were that to be the case; for all my desire is to assist you in forgetting the past, and solely to prove to you that the distractions of the heart are various. The *means* of good and evil are often almost the same—the *end* alone differs. In a word, if the good is as attractive, as *amusing* as the bad, why give preference to the bad? I am about to make a very vulgar and commonplace comparison. Why is it that women select for their lovers men who are in every respect inferior to their husbands? Because the greatest charm in love consists in the impediments that surround it; deprive love of its fears, its anguish, its mysteries and dangers, there will remain nothing, or very little—simply the lover; in a word, it will always be, more or less, very much after the fashion of that man to whom was said, 'Why do you not marry the widow, your mistress?' —'Alas! I have seriously thought of it,' answered he; 'but then I shouldn't know where to spend my evenings.'"

"That is a little too true, your highness," said Lady d'Harville, smiling.

"Well, then, if I can find a method of making you feel these fears, these anguishes, these inquietudes, which so allure you; if I can make useful your natural taste for mystery and adventure, your leaning to dissimulation and cunning—(my bad opinion of women will, you perceive, peep out in spite of me)," added Rudolph, gaily—"shall I not change into generous qualities, imperious instincts, ungovernable impulses—excellent,

if well—fatal, if badly—directed. Say, then, shall we plot between ourselves all sorts of benevolent conspiracies, of charitable profligacies? We will have our trysting-places—our correspondence—our secrets—and, above all, we will hide our doings from the marquis, for your visit this morning to the Morels has no doubt roused his suspicion; in short, if you agree to it, we will commence a benevolent intrigue."

"I accept, with joy and gratitude, this *atrocious* confederacy, your highness," said Clémence; "and to begin our romance, I will return to-morrow to those poor creatures to whom this morning I could only offer a few words of consolation; for taking advantage of my trouble and alarm, a little lame boy stole from me the purse which you had entrusted to me. Oh!" added Clémence, her face losing the sweet expression of gaiety which had for a moment animated it; "if your highness could only know what misery, what a horrible picture of wretchedness—— No! no! I cannot believe that any others so unfortunate can exist! And yet I complain: I accuse my destiny!"

Rudolph, not wishing that Lady d'Harville should observe how much he was touched by this return to herself, which proved the noble quality of her mind, replied gaily: "If you permit me, I will except the Morels from your jurisdiction; you must allow me to take charge of these poor people, and, above all, you must promise me not to return to that miserable house, for, to tell you the truth, I live there."

"Your highness lives there? You are jesting!"

"Nothing more serious. A humble lodging, it is true; two hundred francs a year; in addition to which, I allow the liberal sum of six francs a month to the portress, Mrs. Pipelet, that ugly old woman you saw; but to compensate for this, I have for my next neighbour Miss Dimpleton, the prettiest grisette in the Quartier du Temple; and you will agree that for a merchant's clerk with a salary of only eighteen hundred francs (I pass for a clerk), such a lodging is quite suitable."

"Your presence, so unhoped for in that fatal house, proves to me this, your highness speaks seriously. Some generous action leads you there, no doubt; but for what good work have you reserved me, then? What will be the part cast to me?"

"That of an angel of consolation, and—pardon me the vile expression—a demon of cunning and stratagem—for there are some delicate and painful wounds that the hand of woman alone can soothe and heal, and there are also unfortunate beings so proud, so distrustful, and so hidden from observation, that it requires a rare penetration to discover them, and an irresistible charm to win their confidence."

"And when shall I be allowed to display this penetration, this skill you imagine I possess?" asked Lady d'Harville, impatiently.

"Soon, I hope, you will be called on to achieve a worthy triumph; but it will call for the exercise of your most ingenious resources—the talent of a Machiavel."

"And when, my lord, will you confide to me this great secret?"

"Let me see: this place is our rendezvous; will you do me the favour to grant me an audience in four days?"

"So long?" said Clémence, frankly.

"What would become of the mystery? Only suppose: if we were suspected for conspirators, we should be mistrusted; and I shall, perhaps, have occasion to write to you. What aged woman was that who brought me your letter this evening?"

"An old waiting-maid of my mother's; the very personification of confidence and discretion."

"It is to her, then, that I will address my letters, and she will remit them to you. If you are kind enough to answer me, address: 'To M. Rudolph, Rue Plumet;' and let your maid put your letters in the post."

"I will do that myself, your highness, when taking my usual walk."

"Do you, then, often walk out alone?"

"When the weather is fine, almost every day."

"Admirable! It is a custom that all women should observe from the first month of their marriage, as a provision against good or improper motives that may be imputed. It affords a *precedent*, as the lawyers say; and afterwards, these habitual promenades never give rise to dangerous interpretations. If I had been a woman (and between ourselves, I should have been, I fear, at the same time, very charitable and very trifling), the day after my marriage, I should have taken, quite innocently, the most mysterious steps; I would have ingeniously enveloped myself in situations the most compromising, in order to establish the *precedent*, as I have said, to the end that I might be at liberty to pay a visit to the poor—or to my lover."

"But this is such frightful perfidiousness, your highness," said Lady d'Harville, smiling.

"Happily for you, your ladyship, you have never had occasion to admit the wisdom and utility of such foresight."

Lady d'Haryille no longer smiled; she cast down her eyes, blushed deeply, and said, in a low and sad voice: "This is not generous, your highness!"

At first, Rudolph gazed on the marchioness with astonishment, then said: "I understand your ladyship; but once for all, let us view clearly your position with respect to M. Charles Robert. One day, I will suppose, a lady of your acquaintance shows you one of those miserable-looking mendicants who roll their eyes pitiably, and generally play a despairing tune on the clarionet, to excite the pity of passers-by. 'That is a *deserving* beg-

gar,' says your friend to you; 'he has, at least, seven children, and a wife blind, deaf, dumb, &c., &c.'—'Oh, poor fellow!' you exclaim, as you charitably relieve him; and every time you encounter the mendicant, as he sees you from afar, his eyes implore, his clarionet gives forth melancholy sounds, and your alms drop into his wallet. One day, more and more pitying this *deserving* mendicant, and urged by your friend, who treacherously abuses your confidence, you resolve to pay a charitable visit to your *deserving beggar*, in the midst of his misery. You reach his miserable abode—when, lo! you no longer hear a melancholy clarionet, no longer behold that pitiful and imploring look, but see a merry, jovial, rollicking wag, who trolls out gaily a hearty drinking song! Contempt quickly thrusts out pity, for you have mistaken an impostor for an honest man—nothing more or less. Isn't this so?"

Lady d'Harville could not repress a smile at this singular apologue, and answered Rudolph:—"However acceptable this justification may be, your highness, it appears to me too light for my misdeed."

"It is, after all, only a noble and generous imprudence that you have committed; fortunately there remains too many ways of reparation to cause you serious regret. But shall I not have the pleasure of seeing Lord d'Harville this evening?"

"No, your highness; the scene this morning affected him so strongly, that he is—suffering," said the marchioness, in a low voice.

"Oh, I understand," answered Rudolph, sadly. "Come, take courage; there needs but an aim, a motive, a means of directing your thoughts, as you were saying. Let me hope you will accomplish all this in the future I have marked out for you; then will your mind be so full of sweet consolations, that resentment towards your husband will no longer find room in your heart; you will feel for him some of the interest you bear towards your poor child. And as to that little angel, now that I am acquainted with the cause of her sickly state, I dare almost bid you hope to overcome the dreadful malady with which she is afflicted."

"Is it possible! What means your highness?" cried Clémence, clasping her hands in gratitude.

"My household physician is a man little known, though very learned. Great part of his life was passed in America; and he has spoken to me of two or three cures performed by him on slaves afflicted with this distressing complaint."

"Oh, can it be possible?"

"Nay, do not hope too much; for the disappointment would be the more cruel;—but do not entirely despair."

Clémence d'Harville cast on Rudolph's noble features a look of unspeakable gratitude—on that prince who consoled with so much intelligence, grace, and kindness; and she asked herself how she could possibly have ever felt an interest in such a being as M. Charles Robert. The very idea sickened her.

"What do I not owe your highness!" said she, in a voice trembling with emotion; "you reassure me; you cause me, despite my fears, to hope for my child, and anticipate a new future, which will prove at the same time a pleasure and a duty. Was I not right when I wrote to your highness that, if you would kindly come here this evening, you would finish the day as you began it—by a good action?"

"And add, at least, madame, one of those actions after my own heart, which bestow reciprocal pleasure in their performance," said Rudolph, rising, as the clock struck half-past eleven.

"Farewell, your highness, and do not forget to let me have early news of those people in the Rue du Temple."

"I will see them to-morrow morning, for I had unfortunately forgotten that the little lame boy had stolen your purse—and those unfortunate creatures are, perhaps, in deplorable want. In four days, remember, I shall come and explain the part you will have to perform. I have to forewarn you, that a disguise, perhaps, will be unavoidable."

"A disguise?—oh, how delightful!—what kind, my lord?"

"I cannot at present tell you; but the choice shall be left to your ladyship."

* * * *

On his return home, the prince congratulated himself upon the probable results of his conversation with Lady d'Harville. "To give this lady's heart and mind employment, as she is inevitably alienated from her husband, there must be aroused in her enough romantic curiosity and mysterious attraction (apart from *love*) to quench the fire of her spirit and fancy, and save her from a new flame."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

POVERTY.

PERHAPS the reader has not forgotten an unfortunate family, the father of which was a working jeweller, named Morel, that occupied the garret of the house in the Rue du Temple. We will now introduce him to this sad abode.

It is five o'clock in the morning. Without doors profound silence reigns; snow falls, and a sharp wind freezes it as it falls. A candle, supported by two splinters of wood upon a square block, scarcely penetrates with its sickly, yellow light, the darkness of the garret—a narrow, low-built place, two-thirds of which is formed by the sloping ceiling, which joins by a sharp angle with the flooring, and exposes the inside of the naked moss-grown tiles. Walls of plaster, black-

ened by time, and split in numerous crevices, display the worm-eaten laths which compose the frail division; in one corner of this wretched habitation, a door off the hinges opens upon the staircase. The floor, of a nameless colour, foul, fetid, and slippery, is strewn here and there with bits of dirty straw, old rags, and such large bones as are sold by the vendors of putrid meat, and bought by starving wretches, that they may gnaw the few cartilages which still adhere to them.

A condition so frightful always implies either misconduct or unavoidable misery—but so great, so crushing, so paralyzing, as to enfeeble every energy, and render the object of it too despairing, too strengthless, even to attempt to extricate himself from his degraded state; hence, he crouches in his dirt and destitution like a beast in its den.

During the day, Morel's garret was lighted by a kind of long, narrow skylight, contrived in the sloping roof, framed and glazed, and made to slide by means of a rope; but, at the hour of which we speak, a heavy fall of snow encumbered the window, and effectually excluded the light. The candle placed on Morel's work-bench stood almost in the centre of the chamber, and diffused a circle of pale, yellow light, which, gradually diminishing, was at last lost in the shadow in which the extremities of the garret were concealed; but beyond this might be discerned the faint outline of several whitish forms. On the work-table, merely a roughly-hewn block of oak splashed with grease and soot, lay scattered about, a handful of rubies and diamonds of most astonishing size and brilliancy.

Morel was a worker of *real stones*, and not *false* ones, as he had given out, and as was thought by all in the house in the Rue du Temple. By means of this innocent deception, the costly jewels entrusted to him were supposed to be too valueless to tempt the cupidity of any one. Such riches, confided to the care of one so destitute, render it unnecessary to say a word as to the honesty of Morel.

Seated on a high stool without a back, overcome by fatigue, cold, and hunger, after a long winter's night passed in unceasing labour, the lapidary rests his heavy head upon his work-table on his stiffened arms; his forehead leans against a small grindstone, placed horizontally on the table, and generally put in motion by a little hand-wheel; a fine steel saw, and various other tools, lie near him. The artizan, of whom nothing but the bald skull, fringed by grey hairs, is visible, is clad in an old coarse jacket, next his skin, and a pair of thin trousers; while his ragged list slippers scarcely conceal his blue, cold feet, which rest on the floor. So bitter, so freezing is the wind which freely whistles round this scarcely human dwelling, that, spite of the slumber into which exhaustion has sunk the overworked artizan, his frame frequently shivers involuntarily. The great length of the wick of the unsnuffed candle tells that Morel must have dozed for some time. No sound, save his heavy and irregular breathing, breaks the death-like stillness that prevails; but, alas! the seven other inhabitants of this garret do not sleep. Yes, in this narrow garret live eight people—five children, of whom the youngest is four years old, and the eldest scarcely twelve; and then their sick, declining mother, with an idiotic grandmother, the parent of Morel's wife, now in her eightieth year. The cold must be indeed intense, for the natural warmth of eight persons, huddled into so small a space, does not affect the freezing atmosphere. Indeed, to speak scientifically, but little *caloric* can be *given out* from their poor, weak, exhausted, shivering bodies, from the little infant to the grandmother. Except the father of the family, sunk for a few moments from actual exhaustion, no one sleeps—no, not one, for cold, sickness, and hunger keep, despite of themselves, their weary eyes wide open. Little does the world know how rare and precious to the poor is sound and peaceful sleep, by which they repair their strength and forget their sorrows; it invigorates both mind and body, and the refreshed labourer returns to his rude toil. To sleep thus soundly, cold, hunger, thirst, and racking misery must not be present.

In contrasting the frightful misery of this workman with the value of the precious stones entrusted to his charge, we are struck with one of those comparisons which, while it afflicts, elevates the mind. Constantly has this man before his eyes the heart-rending sight of the miseries of those so dear to him, oppressed by every evil, from cold and hunger to drivelling idiotcy, yet still he respects those jewels, a single one of which would snatch his wife and children from the privations which slowly devour them. Doubtless, he only does his duty—as an honest man; but because this duty is simple, is his performance of it the less great, the less admirable? Are there not circumstances in the practice of duty which render its performance still more meritorious? Does not this mechanic, so wretched, yet so honest, with all this treasure within his grasp, represent an immense and formidable majority of artizans, who, doomed for ever to evils and privations, but peaceable, industrious, and resigned, see every day, shining before their eyes, without hatred or envy, the magnificence of the wealthy? Is it not gratifying, is it not ennobling to reflect, that it is not force, not fear, but *sound moral sense*, which alone restrains this formidable popular ocean, whose overflowing would swallow up society! Shall we refuse to co-operate with all the powers of mind and body, with such generous spirits, who ask but a little *sunshine* for so much misfortune, so much courage, so much resignation?

* * * *

Let us return to this sample—alas! too real

—of frightful misery, which we shall portray in all its naked reality.

The lapidary possesses but one thin mattress and a small piece of blanket, which has fallen to the share of the idiot grandmother, who, in her wild and stupid selfishness, will not share her pallet with any one. At the commencement of the winter she had become furious, and had nearly strangled the youngest child, who had been placed to sleep beside her—a poor little girl of four years old, far gone in consumption, and who severely felt the cold *in* the straw bed, where she slept with her brothers and sisters. Hereafter, we will refer to this method of sleeping, frequently adopted by poor people, in comparison with whom animals are treated like Sybarites—for their litter is changed! Such is the picture which the garret of the artizan presents when the eye can penetrate the gloom beyond the feeble light of the candle. Beside the wall, less damp than the other partitions, is placed on the ground the mattress where the old idiot lies. As she cannot bear her head covered, the shape of the skull and flat forehead is visible, her white hair being cut quite close; while her thick grizzled eyebrows shade the deep-set eyes, from which gleam a wild and savage brightness; her cheeks, hollow, livid, and full of wrinkles, adhere to her prominent cheek-bones and to the salient angles of her jaws. Lying on her side, huddled up, her chin nearly touching her knees, she shivers under a coverlet of grey wool, too small to cover her entirely, and leaving exposed her emaciated legs and the skirt of an old ragged petticoat, in which she is dressed. This pallet exhales a most fetid odour.

At a short distance from the grandmother's straw, also parallel with the wall, is the straw tick which serves as a sleeping-place for the five children, who were thus accommodated:—Each end of the ticking was cut across, then the children were slipped into the damp and rotten straw, the cover of the palliasse serving for both sheets and counterpane. Two little girls, one of them seriously ill, shiver at one end, and three young boys at the other. All these were put to bed dressed, if a few miserable rags can be called clothes. Masses of thick, fair hair, tangled and uncombed, which their mother suffers to grow long, as it insures them, as she fancies, a certain degree of warmth, half hide their pale, emaciated, and suffering faces. One of the boys, with benumbed fingers, holds the canvas covering of the mattrass up to his chin, the better to cover himself; another, fearful of exposing his hands to the cold, secures it between his teeth, which chatter in his head; and the third presses close to his brothers. The younger of the two girls, wasted by consumption, languidly reclines her poor little face, already blue and livid with the hues of death, upon the cold bosom of her sister, five years old, who tries in vain to warm her in her arms, watching over her with anxious solicitude.

On another straw-mattrass, at the end of this miserable den, opposite the children, lies the workman's wife, exhausted by slow fever, and a painful disease, which has confined her for some months past to her bed. Madeleine Morel is six-and-thirty years of age. An old blue cotton handkerchief tied round her retreating forehead, shows more plainly the bilious paleness of her bony features. A brownish circle surrounds her sunken and languid eyes, while bleeding cracks divide her pale lips. Her sad and care-worn countenance, and inexpressive features, indicate one of those mild dispositions, which, devoid of energy or decision, unable to struggle with misfortunes, yield at once, giving way to lamentations. Weak, inactive, of limited capacity, she had remained honest, because her husband was so—left to herself, ignorance and misfortune might have depraved her, and urged her to crime. She loved her children and her husband, but had neither courage nor resolution to restrain open and bitter lamentations on their mutual misfortunes. Frequently the lapidary, whose persistent labour supported the whole family, was compelled to leave his work to console and pacify this poor complaining invalid. Over an old brown, coarse, ragged sheet, which covers his wife, Morel, for greater warmth, has spread some rags, so old that pawnbrokers had refused to receive them.

A stove, a frying-pan, a broken-necked earthen jug, two or three cracked cups scattered here and there on the floor, a washing-stool and tub, and a large brown pitcher placed under the corner of the roof, near the unhinged door, which the wind constantly shook, were all the household utensils.

This depressing picture is lighted by a candle, whose flame, agitated by the freezing north wind that whistles through the tiles, casts fitfully its pale and flickering light on this wretched scene; then darting a ray across the bench where sleeps the wearied lapidary, calls into existence a thousand brilliant gleams, a thousand prismatic sparkles, from the dazzling cluster of diamonds and rubies which lie uncovered before him.

Although the deepest silence reigned in that squalid attic, seven out of eight of its unfortunate inmates were awake, and the eyes of each, from the grandmother to the youngest child, were instinctively fixed upon the lapidary, their only hope, their only resource. In their child-like selfishness, they were uneasy to see him inactive, and borne down under the weight of labour. The mother thought of her children, the children thought of themselves, and the idiot thought of nothing. Suddenly she sat upright in her bed, crossed her long arms, yellow and dry as boxwood, upon her skeleton breast: rose slowly, and blinking as she stared at the light, moved stealthily along, trailing after

her the tattered cover, like a winding-sheet. She was very tall, and her closely-shaven head appeared disproportionately small for her body; a kind of spasmodic motion agitated her thick and heavy under-lip; and, altogether, this hideous face presented the type of ferocious idiocy. The idiot advanced silently towards the bench, like a child about to commit a fault. As she came near the candle, she held her two trembling hands towards the flame—so thin, that the light they shaded imparted to them a livid transparency. Madeleine Morel watched, from her miserable pallet, the slightest movement of the old woman, who, while continuing to warm herself in the flame of the candle, dropped her head, and appeared to contemplate with childish curiosity the medley of diamonds and rubies that sparkled on the table. Absorbed in this contemplation, the idiot did not keep her hands at a sufficient distance from the flame of the candle; she burnt herself, and instantly uttered a hoarse scream. At this noise, Morel started from his slumber, and quickly raised his head. He was a man of forty, with an open, intelligent, and mild countenance, but careworn and furrowed with misery; a grey beard, of many weeks' growth, covered the lower part of his pock-pitted face; his forehead, already bald, showed premature wrinkles, and his inflamed eyelids were red with prolonged watching. One of those constrained positions, but too common among such weakly constitutions among the working classes as are compelled by their occupation to remain nearly all day in the same attitude, had distorted his meagre figure. Constantly stooping over his board, and leaning to the left side, the better to use the grindstone, his naturally feeble frame had become, as it were, petrified, ossified in that position—in which he remained from twelve to fifteen hours a day—till he was completely bent and twisted on one side. His left arm also, from constant and laborious exercise in turning the grindstone, had acquired considerable muscular development; whilst the right arm and hand, always inactive and leaning on the board, the better to present the facets of the diamonds to be acted upon by the grindstone, was wasted frightfully; his feeble legs, almost withered for want of exercise, could scarcely support his debilitated body—all the substance, vitality, and strength of which seemed to be concentrated in that part so unremittingly engaged in labour. Often would poor Morel say, with touching resignation:

"I care less to satisfy my hunger than to strengthen the arm which turns the grindstone."

* * * * *

Waking with a start, the lapidary found himself face to face with the idiot.

"What ails you? What do you want, mother?" said Morel to her, adding in a lower tone, fearing to disturb his family whom he hoped might be asleep, "Go to bed, mother, don't make a noise; Madeleine and the children are sleeping."

"I'm not asleep, father; I am trying to warm poor Adèle," said the elder of the little girls.

"I'm too hungry to sleep," said one of the boys; "it wasn't my turn to have supper with Miss Dimpleton last night."

"Poor children!" said Morel, despondingly; "I hoped at least that you slept."

"I feared to wake you, Morel," said his wife, "or I should have asked for some water. I am very thirsty: my fever has come on again."

"I will directly," said the artizan; "but first I must make your mother return to her bed. Look at her! Leave the jewels alone, will you?" said he to the old woman, who tried to grasp a large ruby, the brilliancy of which fixed her attention. "Go to bed, mother!" repeated he.

"There, there!" answered the idiot, pointing to the precious stone she coveted.

"I am going to be angry," said Morel, raising his voice to frighten the old woman, whom he gently thrust away with his hand.

"Merciful God, Morel, how I suffer from thirst!" murmured Madeleine. "Pray bring me some drink!"

"What would you have me do? I cannot allow your mother to touch the jewels, she may lose another diamond, as she did last year; and God alone knows what we have already suffered through that loss, and what we may still have to endure!" As he spoke thus, the lapidary pressed his hand to his forehead with a gloomy air: then, turning to one of his children, he said, "Felix, give your mother some drink, as you are awake."

"No, no, I will wait; he will take cold," replied Madeleine.

"I shall not be colder out of the straw than in it," said the boy, getting up.

"Come, now! will you be quiet?" cried Morel, in an angry voice, trying to drive away the idiot, who would not leave the bench, and seemed determined to possess herself of one of the jewels.

"Mother, the water in the pitcher is frozen!" cried Felix.

"Break the ice, then," said Madeleine.

"It is too thick; I cannot."

"Morel, do pray break the ice in the pitcher," said Madeleine, in an impatient and piteous voice; "since there is nothing but water, I might at least have a draught of that. You would let me die of thirst!"

"Oh, my God, grant me patience! What do you wish me to do? I cannot leave your mother!" exclaimed the wretched lapidary. He could not, in truth, get rid of the idiot, who, angry at the resistance she met with, uttered a sort of angry growl.

"Call her," said Morel, to his wife, "she will sometimes mind you."

"Mother, go to bed: and, if you will be

good, I will give you some of the coffee you like so much."

"There, there!" repeated the idiot, trying this time to snatch violently the ruby she coveted.

Morel kindly repulsed her, but in vain.

"Good heavens! you know well enough that unless you frighten her with the whip, you cannot quiet her," cried the complaining Madeleine.

"I must do so; but, although she is mad, it cuts me to the heart to threaten the poor old woman with the whip," said Morel. Then, speaking to the idiot, who tried to bite him as he held her back with one hand, he shouted in a loud and angry voice: "Beware of the whip, if you don't go instantly to bed!"—Morel took a whip from under the bench, cracked it loudly at the idiot, and cried: "Make haste to bed! to bed directly!"

At the noise of the whip, the idiot hurried from the work-bench; then turning, she growled between her clenched teeth, and darted looks of the deepest hatred at her son-in-law.

"To bed! to bed!" repeated he, advancing, and again cracking his whip. The idiot slowly backed into her bed, shaking her fist at the lapidary. The latter, anxious to terminate this distressing scene, that he might give some drink to his wife, advanced close to the idiot, and for the last time brandished and cracked his whip sharply, yet without touching her, exclaiming in a threatening tone: "To bed, instantly!"

The old woman, in her fright, began to howl horribly, threw herself upon the bed, and there squatted, like a dog in his kennel, still howling.

The alarmed children, believing their father had struck the old woman, cried out with tearful supplications: "Pray don't beat grandmother; pray don't beat her, father!"

It is impossible to describe the fearful effect of this nocturnal scene, accompanied by the supplicating cries of the children, the furious howlings of the idiot, and the mournful complaints of the suffering wife of the lapidary.

Poor Morel had too frequently been compelled to be an actor in such scenes as the one we have just described, yet, on this occasion his patience and courage seemed to give way; and, throwing down the whip on his work-bench, he cried in accents of despair: "Oh, what a life! What a life!"

"Is it my fault that my mother is an idiot?" said Madeline, crying.

"Is it mine?" said Morel. "What do you expect of me?—that I should kill myself by labouring for you all. Night and day am I at work. I do not complain; so long as I have strength I will go on; but I cannot, at the same time, attend to my business and take care of the idiot, the invalid, and the children. No, heaven is not just—it is too much misery for one man to bear!" added the lapidary, in a despairing voice; and overpowered, he fell back on the stool, his face hidden in his hands.

"As they would not take my mother into the hospital, because she was not mad enough, what do you wish me to do?" said Madeleine, in her usual low, complaining voice. "What is the use of tormenting yourself about that which you cannot prevent, and what good will it do?"

"None at all," rejoined the artizan, hastily brushing away the tears which despair had forced to his eyes; "none at all—you are right; but when everything seems against us, we cannot always control our feelings."

"Gracious God, how I suffer from thirst! I shiver with cold, and yet I am burnt up with fever?" cried Madeleine.

"Wait an instant, and I will give you drink." Morel went to the pitcher which stood beneath the roof. After having with difficulty broken the ice which covered the water, he filled a cup with the chilly liquid, and approached the pallet of his wife, who stretched towards him her eager hands, but, after a moment's reflection, he said: "No, this will be too cold in a fit of fever; it will do you harm."

"Will do me harm? So much the better; quick, then—give it me quickly!" replied Madeleine, bitterly; "it will the sooner end my misery; you will be rid of me—then you will only have to take care of the children and the idiot—the invalid, at least, will be gone."

"Why speak to me thus, Madeleine? I do not deserve it," said Morel, sadly. "Pray do not add reproach to my misery; it will be all right if I retain sufficient strength and reason to work. My head is not very strong: it may fail me, and then what will become of you all? It is for you I speak: if I had only myself to think about, I should care little for to-morrow. Thank God, the river flows alike for all."

"Poor Morel," said Madeleine, affected; "it is true, I am wrong to vex you by saying I hope you might soon be rid of me. Do not believe me—yet, after all, my intention was good, for I am useless to you and the children. For these sixteen months past have I been bed-ridden. Oh, God! I am burning with thirst. Pray, pray let me drink!"

"You shall directly—but I was trying to warm the cup between my hands."

"How kind you are! and I to speak so harshly to you."

"Poor wife, your sufferings have soured your temper; say to me what you like, but do not again tell me you wish to leave me."

"But of what use am I to you?—of what good are our children to us, but to overload you with work?"

"True; yet, thanks to my love for you all, I find I have sufficient strength to work sometimes twenty hours a day, though it has made me crooked and lame. Do you think that for myself alone I should slave as I do? Oh, no;

life has not sufficient charms for that—I would soon end it."

"And so would I," answered Madeleine; "but for the children, I should long since have said: 'Morel, you have had enough of life, and so have I; let us light a pan of charcoal, and defy misery—but the children, the poor children!'"

"Then, you see, dear wife, the children are a real blessing to us, after all," said Morel, with the utmost simplicity; "since they save us from giving way to despair. Come, take your drink, but only by little mouthfuls, for it is still very cold."

"Oh, thank you, Morel!" said Madeleine, drinking with avidity.

"Enough, enough!"

"It was too cold—my shivering increases," said Madeleine, giving him back the cup.

"Alas, alas! I told you it was: now you will be worse again."

"I have no longer strength to tremble. I feel as though wrapped in a sheet of ice!"

Morel took off his jacket, and laid it over his wife's feet, leaving himself entirely uncovered to the waist.

"You will be frozen, Morel!"

"Presently, if I feel cold, I will put it on again for a short time."

"Poor fellow!" sighed Madeleine. Oh! you are right: heaven is not just. What have we done that we should endure such misery, while others——"

"Every one has their troubles—the rich as well as the poor."

"Yes, the great have their troubles, it is true, but they do not feel the pangs of hunger, they do not shiver with the bitter cold. Oh, Morel, when I think that, with the price of one of those diamonds you are polishing, we could procure for ourselves and children the comforts of life, I shudder. And of what use are these diamonds to *them?*"

"If we were always to say: 'Of what use is this or that to others,' we might go great lengths. As well may we ask, of what use is it to the gentleman whom Mrs. Pipelet calls the Commander, to hire and furnish the first floor in this house, when he never comes near it? Of what use is it to him to have good furniture, since he lodges elsewhere?"

"That is very true; there is more than sufficient to furnish many such humble rooms as ours. And then again, every day Mrs. Pipelet makes up a large fire, to prevent the furniture from being spoiled by the damp. Only think, so much warmth thrown away, whilst we and our children freeze! But to all this you will reply: 'We are not *furniture!*' Oh, the rich!—it seems hard."

"No harder for us than for many others, Madeleine. But the rich do not see, and cannot know what misery is; they are born happy, they live happy, they die happy; why then should they think of such wretches as ourselves? And then, I tell you, they cannot imagine such misery; how can they understand privations they never felt? If they are very hungry, then they are glad; for the more they will enjoy their food. If it is very cold, so much the better; they say: 'How seasonable the weather is! what a fine clear frost!' and it is all natural enough. For if they take a walk, on their return, they sit by a good fire, which they enjoy the more from having felt the severe cold; they, therefore, cannot feel much for us, when cold and hunger are the sources of their delightful enjoyments. So, you see, they cannot even understand how others suffer. In their situation we should perhaps do the same."

"Poor people are in that case better than the rich, since they assist one another. That kind girl, Miss Dimpleton, who has so often nursed myself and the children, during our illness, last evening took Jérome and Pierre to sup with her—and she has but little for supper—only a cup of milk and bread. At her age one has a good appetite; she must, therefore, deprive herself to give it to the children."

"Poor girl! she is, indeed, very good; and why?—because she has known what poverty is. As I always said, if the rich knew—if the rich only knew——"

"And the little lady who came yesterday, and appeared so alarmed, she asked if we wanted anything. Well, now, she knows we are in want, yet she has not come again?"

"I dare say she will; for though she seemed so frightened, she looked very gentle and kind."

"Oh, with you, those who are rich are always in the right; I suppose they must be made of different clay to us!"

"I do not say that," replied Morel, mildly; "I say, on the contrary, that they have their faults, as we have ours. Unfortunately, they are not aware of half the misery that exists among the poor: and the misfortune is, that there are many people employed to discover those who commit crimes, but there are none to seek those honest workmen, burdened with families, who are in extreme misery, and who, for the want of a little timely assistance, are tempted to do wrong. It is right to punish crime, but it would be better perhaps to prevent it. You remain honest, say for fifty years, but at last extreme misery and hunger urge you to evil, and then—there is one thief the more! whilst, if any one had known—— But of what use is thinking? the world is as it is. I am poor and hopeless, and therefore speak thus: if I were rich, I should talk of merrymaking, and all sorts of pleasure. But, my poor wife, how do you feel now?"

"Much the same; I cannot feel my legs. But how you tremble! put your jacket on again, and blow out the candle, which is burning to waste, for it is daylight."

In truth, a wan light, struggling through the snow that blocked up the strip of skylight, began to throw a mournful ray on the interior of this abode, making it appear more fright-

ful still; for the shades of night had at least concealed part of its horrors.

"I shall wait now till it is light enough for me to resume my work," said the lapidary, seating himself on the corner of the palliasse by the side of his wife, and resting his forehead between his hands.

After a short silence, Madeleine said to him: "When will Mrs. Mathieu come for the stones you are polishing?"

"This morning. I have but one facet of a false diamond to polish."

"A false diamond! and you only work on real stones, notwithstanding what the people in the house are led to believe!"

"Don't you remember——No, truly, you were asleep the other day when Mrs. Mathieu came about them. Well, you must know, she brought me ten false diamonds, Rhenish pebbles, to cut to the same size, and in the same manner, as the like number of real stones which she brought—those which are with the rubies. I never saw diamonds of purer water; those ten stones alone are certainly worth more than sixty thousand francs."

"And why does she want them imitated?"

"A lady of rank, to whom they belong—a duchess, I believe—has commissioned M. Baudoin, the jeweller, to sell her jewels, and replace them with false ones. Mrs. Mathieu, who supplies M. Baudoin, told me so, when she brought the real stones, that I might be particular in giving to the false ones the same cut and shape; she has employed four other lapidaries, for there were forty or fifty stones to cut, and I could not do them all, as they must be ready by this morning, to give M. Baudoin time to set the false stones. Mrs. Mathieu says that many ladies do the same thing, and replace their diamonds with Rhine pebbles."

"You see that false stones have the same effect as real ones; yet those grand ladies who think only of adornment, never dream of sacrificing a diamond for the benefit of those as unhappy as ourselves."

"Poor wife, pray be more reasonable; grief makes you unjust. Who do you suppose knows that there are such people as the Morels in existence, much less that they are in want?"

"Oh, what a man! what a man you are! Were they to cut you in pieces, you would still give thanks."

Morel shrugged his shoulders with compassion.

"How much will Mrs. Mathieu owe you this morning?" asked Madeleine.

"Nothing! I have already had a hundred and twenty francs in advance."

"Nothing! But did we not spend our last franc the day before yesterday? We have not a farthing in the world!"

"That is true," said Morel, dejectedly.

"And what are we to do?"

"I cannot tell."

"The baker will give us no more bread on trust?"

"No; yesterday I borrowed a loaf of Mrs. Pipelet."

"Mother Burette will not lend us anything?"

"Lend us! Now that she has all that belongs to us in pledge, what can she lend on?—our children?" said Morel, with a bitter smile.

"But my mother, yourself, and the children, had yesterday but one pound of bread among you all! You cannot die of starvation! But this is entirely your fault—you would not get your name this year in the list of the Board of Casual Relief."

"They only enter on the list the names of those who own furniture—and we have none; they consider us as living in a furnished room, and therefore ineligible. It is necessary, in order to be admitted to the shelter of the *refuge*, that the children at least should have each a blouse—ours have but rags; besides, before they would have set down our names, I must have gone backwards and forwards perhaps twenty times, and the loss of time would not have been compensated for what they might have given, for, after all, what is it?—a loaf *once a month*, and half-a-pound of meat *once a fortnight*."

"What can you do, then?"

"Perhaps the lady who came yesterday will not forget us."

"You must not rely upon that. Surely Mrs. Mathieu will advance you a few francs. You have worked for her the last ten years; she cannot suffer an honest workman, with so large a family, to be in utter want."

"I do not think she can lend us anything. She did all she could in advancing by instalments the hundred and twenty francs; it is a large sum for her. Although she is a dealer in diamonds, and sometimes has by her jewels to the amount of forty thousand francs, she is not rich; if she gains a hundred francs a month, she is quite satisfied—and she has two nieces to bring up. A hundred francs to her is almost as much, you see, as they are to us; and there are times when she has them not, as you know well. As I am so much in advance I cannot ask her to take food from herself, and those belonging to her, to give to me and mine."

"See what it is to work for agents instead of first-rate jewellers, who are sometimes more liberal! But you always eat your wheat in the grain—it is all your fault——"

"My fault!" exclaimed the unhappy man, exasperated by this foolish reproach, "is it not your mother who is the cause of all our miseries? If we had not been obliged to pay for the diamond she lost, we should have been beforehand—I should receive the full price of my labour—we should possess the eleven hundred francs that we drew from the savings-bank, to add to the thirteen hundred we borrowed from M. Ferrand—curses on him!"

"And you still persist in not asking him

for assistance, to be sure he is avaricious, and it might not be of use—but still one should always try, there can be no harm in that."

"Ask him!—ask charity of him!" cried Morel. "I would sooner be roasted to death by a slow fire. Cease speaking to me about that man, or you will drive me mad!"

While saying this, the countenance of the lapidary, usually calm and resigned, assumed an expression of gloomy energy; the blood rushed to his pale face, he rose suddenly from the bed on which he sat, and paced the room with an agitated step. In spite of his cold-pinched and deformed figure, the attitude and features of the man expressed lofty indignation.

"I am not revengeful," cried he; "in my life I never injured any one; but I heartily wish this lawyer as much misery as he has caused me!" Then putting both hands to his head he murmured, in a mournful tone: "Oh, my God! why does my evil destiny—which I do not deserve—deliver me and mine up, bound hand and foot, to that hypocrite? Has he the right to use the wealth to destroy, corrupt, and make desolate those he would devote to ruin?"

"That's right, that's right," said Madeleine, "go on with your abuse; it will do you much good when he puts you in prison, as he can do at any time, for that bill for thirteen hundred francs, on which he has obtained judgment against you three months since. He holds you as a bird tied by the leg. I also detest that lawyer; but as we are dependent on him, we must——"

"Let him seduce our daughter! Say you?" said the lapidary, in a voice of thunder.

"For heaven's sake, do not speak so loud; the children are awake—they will hear you!"

"Pshaw! pshaw! so much the better," answered Morel, with a dreadful sneer; "it will be a good example to our two younger girls; it will prepare them, should the notary at some future time take a fancy to them. Are we not in his toils, as you constantly remind me? Repeat that he can put me to prison; come, speak frankly—we must give up our innocent child to him?" The unhappy man finished his imprecation in a burst of sobs; for his honest and good nature could not, for any length of time, sustain this tone of bitter sarcasm.

"Oh, my children!" cried he, in a flood of tears, "my poor, poor children, my good, my beautiful Louise! too, too beautiful, as from that springs all our misery. Had she not possessed such loveliness, this man would not have proposed to lend me the money. I am industrious and honest; the jeweller would have given me time; I should not have been under obligation to this grey-headed monster, and he could not have taken advantage of our poverty to endeavour to seduce my daughter; for I would never have left her another day in his house! But it must be—must be! I dare not remove her; he has me in his power. Oh, misery, misery! what outrages she is compelled to endure!"

"But what can we do? He told Louise: 'If you quit me, I will put your father in prison.'"

"Yes, he already speaks to her as to a debased creature!"

"If it were only that, we might remedy the evil; but should she quit the lawyer's service, he will take you away, and then, whilst you are in prison, what will become of me, alone with mother and the children? Even if Louise could earn, in another place, twenty francs a month, how could seven persons live upon that?"

"Yes! that we may exist, Louise is exposed to dishonour!"

"You always exaggerate: the lawyer is urgent, it is true—she tells us so; but she is virtuous, you well know."

"Oh, yes, she is virtuous, industrious, and good! When she saw us in difficulty on account of your illness, she desired to go to service, in order not to be a burden upon us; but when I consented, what did it not cost me! She a servant, ill-treated, humbled!—she, so naturally proud, that you remember we laughed and called her 'the princess,' because she said, jestingly, that by neatness alone she would make our humble abode like a little palace. Dear child! it would have been my greatest happiness to keep her with us, though I had to work all night. And then, when I saw her lovely face and her pretty bright eyes gazing on me as I sat at my bench, and heard her sing—my labour was nothing! Poor Louise! so industrious, and so cheerful! Even your mother obeyed her, and did all she wished her to do! But then, when she spoke to you, when she looked at you, it was impossible not to agree with her. And what care she took of you! What pains she took to divert you! And how tenderly she looked after her little brothers and sisters, finding time for everything! Oh, with dear Louise, all our peace and happiness—all—all left us!"

"Oh, Morel! do not recall the past to me—you will break my heart," said Madeleine, as her hot tears rained down.

"And when I think that perhaps this old monster—oh! the thought turns my brain—I feel inclined to go and kill him, and then—myself."

"Then what should we do—what would become of us? Besides, I tell you again, you exaggerate. The notary has perhaps only jested with Louise. Consider, too, he goes to mass every Sunday, is often with the priests; and many persons say it is safer to trust money in his care than in the savings-bank itself."

"What does that prove? That he is rich, and a hypocrite. I know Louise well: she is virtuous; but she loves us so dearly, that her heart bleeds for our misery. She knows that, without me, you would all die of hunger; and should the lawyer have threatened to im-

prison me, the poor child's mind may have been so wrought upon, that she may have been persuaded by that villain—on our account—to yield to—— Oh, God, my brain burns! I feel as though I should go mad!"

"But, if it should be so, the notary must have given her money and presents; and I am sure she would keep nothing for herself—she would have given us all."

"Silence, Madeleine! How can you, a mother, allow such thoughts of your child to find utterance? Louise bribed to infamy!"

"But not for herself, but for us, she——"

"Silence! again I say, silence! You make me shudder. I do not know what would have become of you and my children, without me, if you can entertain such thoughts."

"What harm have I said?"

"Not any."

"Why then do you fear——"

The lapidary interrupted his wife hastily: "Because I have noticed, for the last three months, every time that Louis comes here, and when she embraces me, she blushes."

"Yes, with delight at seeing you."

"Or shame! She appears more and more sad."

"Yes, because she sees us more and more unhappy. Besides, when I spoke to her of the lawyer, she told me that now he no longer threatens to put you in prison."

"Yes, but at what price has he foregone his threats? She does not say that, and she blushes when she embraces me. It would be bad enough for a master to say to a poor, virtuous girl: 'Either yield to my wishes, and become what I would have you, or quit my house; and if any one should make inquiries of me as to your character, I will give you such a one as will effectually preclude you from getting a respectable situation; but how much more brutal and unfeeling it is to frighten a young and innocent girl into the surrender of her virtue, by threatening to imprison her father, when the unfeeling monster who employs the threat, knows that on the labour of that father depends a helpless family for their daily bread! Oh, this is a thousand times more like a crime unsurpassed in atrocity!"

"And when you reflect, that with one of the diamonds which lies there upon the bench, you could raise enough to repay the lawyer, take our daughter away, and keep her with us——" said Madeleine, murmuring.

"What avails it, that you a hundred times repeat to me the same thing! Certainly, if I were rich, I should not be poor. Is that what you mean?" replied Morel, with mournful impatience; for honesty was so natural, so innate, so to speak, in this man, that it never entered his mind that his wife, broken down, and soured by misfortune, could have any bad intention, and wished to tempt his irreproachable rectitude. He therefore continued, bitterly: "We must be resigned. Happy are those who can have their children with them, and guard them from dangers; but who will defend the working-girl?—no one. As soon as she is old enough to earn anything, she goes in the morning to her employment, and comes back in the evening. During the day the mother and father are forced to work too; so they have not opportunity to watch over the conduct of their children: and then folks exclaim at the misconduct of these poor girls, as though their parents had the means of keeping them at home, or looking after their morals when they are out. Privations are nothing compared to the grief of leaving a wife, a child, or a parent. It is, above all, to us poor people that the affections of a family are salutary and consoling; and yet, as soon as our children can use their faculties, we are compelled to part with them."

At this moment a violent knocking was heard at the garret door.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE EXECUTION.

THE surprised lapidary rose and opened the door. Two men entered the garret. One of them was tall and thin, with a face mean and pimpled, surrounded by thick, greyish whiskers; he held in his hand a stout loaded cane, and wore a shapeless hat and a large green great-coat, covered with mud, and buttoned close up to the neck; the black velvet collar, much worn, exposed to view his long, bare, red throat, which resembled a vulture's. This man was one Malicorne. The other was short and thick-set, his countenance equally mean, and his hair red. He was dressed with an attempt at finery, quite ridiculous. Bright studs fastened the front of his shirt, whose cleanliness was more than doubtful; a long gold chain, passed across his second-hand plaid stuff waistcoat, was left to view by a velveteen jacket, of a yellowish-grey colour. This man's name was Bourdin.

"Oh, what a stink of misery and death is here!" said Malicorne, stopping at the threshhold.

"The fact is, it does not smell of musk. What habits!" repeated Bourdin, turning up his nose in disgust and disdain. He then advanced towards the artizan, who looked at him with mingled surprise and indignation.

Through the half-open door was seen Hoppy's evil, watchful, and cunning face, who, having followed the strangers, unknown to them, was narrowly watching and listening attentively.

"What do you want?" challenged the lapidary, roughly, disgusted with the rudeness of the two men.

"Jérome Morel," responded Bourdin.

"I am he."

"Working jeweller."

"The same."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Once more, I am that person; you annoy me—what do you want? Explain, or leave the room!"

"Oh, you are coming the *bounce*, are you? I say, Malicorne," said this man, turning towards his companion, "there is no catch here; it is not like the haul at Viscount de Saint-Remy's."

"No, but when there is much, the door is shut against you, as we found in the Rue de ——. The bird had watched the net, and would not be taken; while such vermin as these stick to their *cribs* like a snail to his shell."

"It is my opinion that they only require to be jugged to cram themselves."

"Still the costs will be more than ever the creditor *wolf* will get here; however, that's his look-out."

"Hold!" said Morel, with indignation; "if you were not drunk, as you surely are, I should be very angry. Instantly leave my room!"

"How very sharp you are this morning, old lopsides!" cried Malicorne, insultingly alluding to the deformity in the lapidary's person. "Do you hear, Malicorne?—he has the impudence to call this place a *room*—a hole where I would not put my dog."

"For heaven's sake!" cried Madeleine, so alarmed, that till then she had not spoken a word, "call for assistance; perhaps they are thieves. Take care of the diamonds!"

In truth, seeing these two strangers, of doubtful appearance, approach nearer and nearer to the bench on which lay the jewels, Morel, fearing some evil intention, ran forward, and with both hands covered the precious stones.

Hoppy, always on the watch, and listening, hearing Madeleine's words, and seeing the movement of the artizan, said to himself: "They say he is a cutter of false stones; if so, he would not fear their being stolen. Just as well to know that. I *take!* Then again, Mother Mathieu, who comes here so often, is a dealer in *real;* and those she has in her casket are real diamonds. I will put the Owl up to this!" added Red Arm's son.

"If you do not leave this room instantly, I will call the police," said Morel.

The children, frightened at this scene, began to cry, while the old idiot started upright in her bed.

"If any one has a right to call the police, we're the men. Do you hear, Mister Sideways?" said Bourdin.

"You'll see the police lend a hand to take you, if you don't go quietly," added Malicorne; "we have not the magistrate with us, it is true; but if you wish to enjoy his society, you shall have a taste of one, just out of his bed, quite hot and heavy. Bourdin will go and fetch him."

"To prison! Me?" cried the astounded Morel.

"Yes, to Clichy."

"To Clichy!" repeated the artizan, with a wild look.

"Is he hard of hearing?" asked Malicorne.

"Well, then, to the debtor's prison, if you like that better," explained Bourdin.

"You—you—are—can it be?——the lawyer! Oh, my God!"

The artizan, pale as death, fell back on his stool, unable to utter another word.

"We are the officers who are to take you, if we can; do you understand now, old fellow?"

"Morel, it is for the bill in the hands of Louise's master! We are all lost!" said Madeleine, with a sorrowful voice.

"This is the warrant," said Malicorne, taking from his dirty pocket-book a stamped writ.

After having mumbled over in the usual way a part of this document, in a voice hardly intelligible, he pronounced distinctly the last words, unfortunately too well understood by the artizan:—

"As final judgment, the court condemns Jérome Morel to pay to Pierre Petit-Jean, merchant,* by all his goods, and even with his body, the sum of thirteen hundred francs, with lawful interest, dated from the day of the protest; and he is besides condemned to pay all other and extra costs. Given and judged at Paris, the 30th of September," &c., &c.

"And Louise, then? Louise!" cried Morel, almost distracted, without appearing to have heard what had just been read. "Where is she? She must have left the lawyer, since he sends me to prison. Louise! my child! what has become of her?"

"Who is this Louise?" said Bourdin.

"Let him alone," said Malicorne. "Don't you see he's coming the artful?" Then, approaching Morel, he added: "Come, to the right-about-face, march; I want to breathe the air, I am poisoned here!"

"Morel, do not go!" said Madeleine, wildly. "Kill them, the thieves! Oh, you are a coward! You will let them take you, and abandon us to our fate."

"Act as though you were at home, madame," said Bourdin, sarcastically; "but if your husband lifts his hand against me, I will give him something to remember it by," continued he, twisting his loaded stick round and round.

Occupied solely with thoughts of Louise, Morel heard nothing of what was said. Suddenly, an expression of bitter joy lighting up his face, he cried out, "Louise has quitted the lawyer's house. I shall go to prison with a light heart!" But then, glancing round him, he exclaimed, "But my wife, and her mother, and my poor children—who will support them? They will not trust me with stones to cut in prison; for it will be sup-

* The crafty notary, incompetent to proceed in his own name, had got from the unfortunate Morel a blank acceptance, and had introduced a third party's name.

posed that my own misconduct has sent me there. Does this lawyer desire the death of all of us?"

"Once for all, let us be off!" said Bourdin; "I am sick of all this, Come, dress yourself, and march."

"My good gentlemen, forgive what I have just said to you," cried Madeleine, still in bed; "you will not have the cruelty to take away Morel; what do you think will become of me, with my five children and my idiot mother? There she is, huddled up on her mattress. She is foolish, my good gentlemen; she is quite out of her mind."

"The old woman that is shorn?"

"Sure enough she is shaved," said Malicorne; "I thought she had on a white scullcap."

"My dear children, throw yourselves at the feet of these two gentlemen," said Madeleine, hoping, by a last effort, to soften the bailiffs; "entreat them not to take away your poor father—our only hope." But in spite of the order of their mother, the children, frightened and crying, dared not leave their beds.

At the unusual noise, and the sight of the two bailiffs, whom she did not know, the idiot began to utter deafening howls, crouching herself against the wall. Morel appeared careless to all that was passing around him; the blow was so frightful, so unexpected, the consequences of this arrest appeared so terrible, that he could scarcely believe in its reality. Already weakened by privations of every description, his strength failed him; he remained pale and haggard, seated on his stool, as though incapable of speech or motion, his head drooping on his breast, and his arms hanging listlessly down.

"Confound it! when will all this end?" cried Malicorne; "think you that we come here for fun? Off with you, or I shall make you!" So saying, the bailiff put his hand on the artizan's shoulder, and shook him roughly. The threat and action alarmed the children; the three little boys left their mattress half naked, and came in a flood of tears, to throw themselves at the feet of the bailiffs, and, with clasped hands, cried, in tones of touching earnestness, "Pray, pray do not kill father."

At sight of these unhappy children, shivering with cold and fear, Bourdin, in spite of his natural callousness, and the constant sight of scenes like the present, felt something akin to compassion; his companion, unpitying, brutally disengaged his leg from the grasp of the kneeling supplicants.

"Hands off, you young ragamuffins! A pretty business ours would be, truly, if we had always to do with such beggars!"

A fearful addition was made to the horrors of this scene. The elder of the little girls, who had remained in the straw with her sick sister, cried out, "Oh, mother, mother! I do not know what is the matter with Adèle! She is quite cold, and she stares so at me; and she don't breathe!"

The poor consumptive child had just quietly expired, without a murmur, her looks resting on her sister, whom she tenderly loved.

No language can describe the heart-rending cry of anguish uttered by the diamond-cutter's wife at this frightful announcement, for she understood all. It was one of those stifling, convulsive screams, torn from the depth of a mother's heart.

"My sister seems as though she were dead!" continued the child. "Oh, how she frightens me! She still looks at me, but how cold her face is!" Saying this, the poor child suddenly rose from the side of her dead sister, and, running terrified, threw herself into the arms of her mother; while the distracted parent, forgetful that her paralyzed limbs were incapable of sustaining her, made a violent effort to rise, and run towards the corpse; but her strength failed her, and she fell on the floor, uttering a last cry of despair. That cry found an echo in Morel's heart, and roused him from his stupor; with one step he reached the bed's side, snatching from it his child, four years old. She was dead! Cold and want had hastened her end, although her complaint, brought on by the want of common necessaries, was beyond cure. Her poor little limbs were already cold and stiff. Morel, his grey hair almost standing on end with despair and fright, remained motionless, holding his dead child in his arms, whom he contemplated with fixed, tearless eyes, bloodshot with agony.

"Morel! Morel! give my Adèle to me!" shrieked the unhappy mother, holding out her arms towards her husband; "it is not true that she is dead: you shall see—I will warm her in my arms!"

The idiot's curiosity was excited by the haste with which the two bailiffs approached the lapidary, who would not part with the body of his infant. The old woman ceased to howl, rose from her bed, slowly approached Morel, and passing her hideous and stupid face over his shoulder, gazed vacantly on the corpse of her grandchild. The features of the idiot retained their usual expression of ferocity. After a little time, she uttered a sort of hoarse, hollow groan, like a hungry beast, and, returning to her bed, she threw herself upon it, crying out, "I am hungry! I am hungry!"

"You see, gentlemen, this poor little girl, just four years old—Adèle; yes, she was named Adèle. Only last night, she fondly returned my caresses—and now—look at her! You will perhaps say that I have one less to feed, and that I ought not to murmur," said the artizan, with a haggard look.

The poor man's reason began to totter under so many repeated shocks.

"Morel, I want my child; I will have her!" said Madeleine.

"True, true," replied the lapidary; "each in turn; that is but fair!" He went and laid the child in the arms of his wife. Then,

hiding his face between his hands, he groaned bitterly. Madeleine, almost as frenzied as her husband, laid the child in the straw of her couch, and watched it with a sort of savage jealousy; while the other children were kneeling round in tears.

The bailiffs, for a moment softened by the death of the child, soon returned to their accustomed brutality of conduct.

"Oh, look here, my friend," said Malicorne to the lapidary, "your child is dead; it is unfortunate, but we are all mortal; we cannot help it, nor can you, so there's an end of it. We have an extra job to do to-day—a *swell* to grab."

Morel did not hear the man. Completely lost in mournful contemplation, the artizan said to himself, in a hollow and broken voice: "It will be necessary to bury my poor little girl—to watch her here till they come to carry her away. But how?—we have nothing! And the coffin!—who will give us credit? Oh, a little coffin for a child of four years old ought not to cost much! And then we shall want no bearers! One can take it under his arm! Ha! ha! ha!" added he, with a frightful burst of laughter, "how lucky I am! She might perhaps have lived to be eighteen, Louise's age, and no one would have given me credit for a large coffin!"

"Egad! this chap seems as though he would lose his senses!" said Bourdin to Malicorne. "Look at him; he quite frightens me! and how the old idiot howls with hunger! What a queer lot!"

"We must, however, make a finish; although the arrest of this beggar is only for seventy-six francs, seventy-five centimes, it is only right that we should swell the costs to two hundred and forty or fifty francs. It is the *wolf* who pays."

"You mean who has to *fork out*—for this poor devil here will have to pay the fiddler, since it is he that must dance."

"By the time he has paid his creditor two thousand five hundred francs, for principal, interest, costs, and all, he will be warm."

"It will not be then as now, for it freezes," said the bailiff, blowing his fingers. "Come, old fellow, pack up, and let us be off; you can blubber as you go along. Who the devil can help the young-un's kicking the bucket!"

"Besides, when people are so poor, they have no right to have children."

"A good idea!" said Malicorne. Then, slapping Morel on the shoulder, he continued: "Come, come, old boy, we can wait no longer; since you cannot pay, off to prison with you!"

"Prison!" said a pure, youthful voice; "Morel to prison!" A young, bright, rosy brunette suddenly entered the garret.

"Oh, Miss Dimpleton!" said one of the children, crying; "you are so good; save papa! they want to take him to prison, and little sister is dead."

"Adèle dead!" exclaimed the girl, whose large, brilliant black eyes were veiled in tears. "Your father to prison? This cannot be!" Stupfied by surprise, she looked alternately at the lapidary, his wife, and the bailiffs.

"My pretty girl," said Bourdin, approaching Miss Dimpleton, "you're cool, you must try to make this poor man listen to reason; his little girl is dead, but nevertheless he must come with us to Clichy—to the debtors' prison. We are sheriffs' officers."

"It is, then, all true," said the girl.

"Quite true. The mother has the little one in her bed—they cannot take it from her; and while she is hugging it there, the father ought to take the opportunity of slipping out."

"My God! my God! what misery!" said Miss Dimpleton. "What is to be done?"

"Pay, or go to prison! there is no other way—unless you have notes for two or three thousand francs to lend them," said Malicorne, in a careless tone; "if you have them, *shell out*, and we will *cut*, devilish glad to get away."

"Oh, this is frightful!" said Miss Dimpleton, with indignation; "daring to jest with such dreadful misfortunes."

"Well then, joking aside," replied the other bailiff, "if you would do some good, endeavour to prevent the woman from seeing us take away her husband. You will thus save each of them a very disagreeable quarter of an hour."

The advice was good, though coarsely given, and Miss Dimpleton, following it, approached Madeleine, who, distracted with grief, did not appear to notice the young girl, as she knelt down beside the bed with the children.

Meanwhile, Morel had only recovered from his temporary delirium to sink under the most painful reflections. Having become calm, he could view far too clearly the horror of his situation. The notary must be pitiless, since he had gone to such extremity; the bailiffs did but do their duty. The artizan was therefore resigned.

"Come, come, let's be marching some time to-day," said Bourdin to him.

"I cannot leave these diamonds here, my wife is half mad," said Morel, pointing to the stones scattered upon the bench; "the person for whom I work will come for them this morning, or in the course of the day. Their amount is considerable."

"Good!" said Hoppy, who still remained near the half-open door; "good, good! Screech-Owl shall know that."

"Grant me only till to-morrow," urged Morel, "that I may restore the diamonds."

"Impossible! We must go immediately."

"But I cannot, by leaving the diamonds here, run the risk of their being lost."

"Take them with you, a coach waits at the door, which you will have to pay for, with the other expenses. We can call on the owner of the stones; if he is not at home, you can place them in the registry at Clichy; they will be as safe there as in the bank. Come, make

haste; we will slip away before your wife or children are aware of it."

"Grant me only till to-morrow, that I may bury my child!" entreated Morel, with a supplicating voice, half stifled with the sobs he endeavoured to restrain.

"No! we have already lost more than an hour waiting here."

"This burying still worries you, then?" added Malicorne.

"Oh, yes! it makes me sad," said Morel, with bitterness; "you so much fear to grieve people. Well, then, a last farewell!"

"There, again! confound you, make haste!" said Malicorne, with brutal impatience.

"How long have you had the order to arrest me?"

"The judgment was signed four months since; but it was only yesterday that our officer received instructions from the lawyer to put it in execution."

"Yesterday only. Why was it delayed so long?"

"How can I tell? Come, pack up."

"Yesterday! and Louise not yet here! Where can she be? what has become of her?" said the lapidary, taking from the bench a card-box filled with cotton, in which he arranged the jewels. "But, never mind that; in prison I shall have plenty of time for thinking."

"Come, pack up the duds to take with you, and make haste and dress yourself."

"I have no clothes to pack up; I have only these diamonds to take away, and place in the prison registry."

"Well, then, dress yourself."

"I have no other clothes than these."

"Going out in these rags?" said Bourdin.

"You will be ashamed of me, doubtless," said the lapidary, bitterly.

"No, it is of no consequence, since we go in your coach," answered Malicorne.

"Father, father! mother is calling you," said one of the children.

"You hear?" muttered Morel, rapidly, appealing to one of the bailiffs; "do not be inhuman; grant me a last favour. I have not the courage to say farewell to my wife and children; it would break my heart. If they see you take me away they will run after me, and I would avoid that. I therefore beg of you to say aloud that you will return in three or four days, and pretend to go away; you can wait for me on the landing below; I will come to you in less than five minutes. That will spare me the pain of saying farewell. I will no longer resist, I promise you. I shall go stark mad; I was nearly so, just now."

"Not so green!—you want to give us the slip!" said Malicorne, "want to bolt, old son!"

"Oh, God! God!" cried Morel, with mournful indignation.

"I don't think he intends to chouse us," said Bourdin, in a low tone to his companion; "let us do as he wishes, or we'll never get away. I will wait outside the door; there is no other outlet from the garret—he cannot escape us."

"Very well; but he needn't be so particular about leaving the mucky crib!" Then, addressing Morel in a low voice, he said: "Now then, look sharp, and we will wait for you below. Make haste, and offer some pretence for our going."

"I thank you," said Morel.

"Very well, it shall be so," said Bourdin, in a loud voice, and looking significantly at the artizan; "in such case, as you promise to pay in a short time, we will leave you for the present, and call again in four or five days; but then you must be punctual."

"Yes, gentlemen, I trust I shall then be able to pay you."

The bailiffs left the room; while Hoppy, for fear of being seen, had disappeared down the staircase at the same time the bailiffs quitted the garret.

"Madame Morel, do you hear?" said Miss Dimpleton, trying to withdraw the attention of the mother from her melancholy abstraction; "they will not take away your husband—the two men are gone."

"Mother, don't you hear? they will not take father away," said the eldest of the boys.

"Morel, listen to me," murmured Madeleine, in a state of delirium. "Take one of the large diamonds and sell it—no one will know it, and we shall be saved. Our Adèle will no longer feel cold; she will not be dead."

Taking advantage of a moment when none belonging to him were observing his actions, the lapidary cautiously left the room. The bailiff was waiting for him upon a sort of little landing, covered also by the roof. Upon this landing opened the door of a loft, which had formerly been part of the garret occupied by the Morels, and in which Pipelet kept his stock of leather; and the worthy porter called this place his *box at the play*, because, by means of a hole made in the wall between two laths, he was sometimes a witness to the sad scenes that passed in the Morels' room. The bailiff noticed the door of the loft; in a moment, he thought that most likely his prisoner had reckoned upon that outlet for escape, or to hide himself.

"Come, march, old fellow!" said he, beginning to descend the stairs, and making a sign to the lapidary to follow.

"One minute more, I beseech!" said Morel; and he fell on his knees upon the floor. Through a chink in the door, he threw a last look upon his family, and clasping his hands, he uttered, in a low, heart-rending voice, while tears flowed down his haggard cheeks: "Farewell, my dear children—my poor wife! may heaven preserve you all! Farewell!"

"Make haste and cut that sermon," said Bourdin, brutally. "Malicorne is quite right; you needn't make so much fuss about leaving

the stinking kennel. What a hole! what a hole!"

Morel rose to follow the bailiff, when the words "Father! father!" sounded on the staircase.

"Louise!" exclaimed the lapidary, raising his hands towards heaven; "I can then clasp you to my breast before I go!"

"I thank thee, God, I am in time!" said the voice, approaching nearer and nearer, and light steps were heard rapidly ascending the stairs.

"Be calm, my dear," said a third voice, sharp, asthmatic, and out of breath, coming from a lower part of the house; "I will lay in wait, if I must, in the alley, with my broom and my old darling, and they shan't leave here till you have spoken to them, the contemptible beggars!"

The reader has doubtless recognized Mrs. Pipelet, who, less nimble than Louise, followed her slowly. An instant after, the lapidary's daughter was in her father's arms.

"It is indeed you, Louise! my darling Louise!" said Morel, crying; "but how pale you are! For mercy's sake, what ails you?"

"Nothing, nothing, father," stammered Louise. "I have run so fast. Here is the money!"

"How is this?"

"You are free!"

"So you know?"

"Yes, yes! Here, sir, take the money," said the young girl, giving a rouleau of gold to Malicorne.

"But this money, Louise—this money?"

"You shall know all presently; don't be uneasy. Come and comfort dear mother."

"No, not now!" exclaimed Morel, placing himself before the door, remembering that Louise was still in ignorance of the death of the little girl; "wait, I must speak to you. Now, about this money?"

"Stay!" said Malicorne, as he finished counting the gold, and while putting it in his pocket; "sixty-four, sixty-five—that will just make thirteen hundred francs. Have you no more than that, my little dear?"

"Why, you only owe thirteen hundred francs?" said Louise, addressing her father, with a stupefied air.

"Yes," said the lapidary.

"Stop!" rejoined the catchpole; "the bill is for thirteen hundred francs. Well, the bill is paid; but the expenses? Without the execution, they are already eleven hundred and forty francs." *

"Gracious heaven!" cried Louise; "I thought it was only thirteen hundred francs in all! But, sir, we will very soon pay you the remainder; this is a pretty good sum on account—is it not, father?"

"Soon!—very well; bring the money to the office, and we will then let your father go. Come, let's be off."

"You will take him away?"

"At once. This is on account. When the rest is paid, he will be free. Go on, Bourdin; let us get out of this."

"Mercy! mercy!" shrieked Louise.

"Oh, what a row! here it is—the old game over again; it is enough to make one sweat in the depth of winter—on my honour!" said the bailiff, in a brutal tone. Then advancing towards Morel, he continued: "if you don't come along at once, I will take you by the collar, and bundle you down. This wind-up is beastly!"

"Oh, poor father! when I had hoped to save you!" said Louise, overwhelmed.

"No, no! hope nothing for me! Heaven is not just!" cried the lapidary, in a voice of deep despair, and stamping his feet with rage.

"Peace! heaven is just! There is a Providence for honest men!" said a soft, yet manly voice.

The same instant Rudolph appeared at the door of the little recess, from whence he had, unseen, witnessed the greater part of the scenes we have just related. He was very pale, and deeply moved. At this sudden interposition, the bailiffs drew back with surprise; while Morel and his daughter stared at the prince vacantly. Taking from his pocket a small parcel of folded bank-notes, Rudolph selected three, and giving them to Malicorne, said to him: "Here are two thousand five

* We append some curious facts about imprisonment for debt, taken from "*Le Pauvre Jacques*," a paper published by the Society of Christian Morality (Prison Committee):—

"A protest and a warrant is legally set down as at 4 francs 35 centimes for the first, and 4 francs 70 centimes for the other, but is generally increased by the warrant-officers to 10 fr. 40c., and 16fr. 40c. respectively. Thus is 26fr. 80c. illegally obtained for what should have been but 9fr. 50c. The law sets down bailiff fees thus:—Stamp and registry, 5fr. 50c.; hackney-coach, 5fr.; arresting and imprisonment, 60fr. 25c.; turnkey's fee, 8fr. Total 76fr. 75c. One bill of charges, taken as the average of those sent in by sheriffs' officers, swells the above to 240 francs!"

In the same paper is this paragraph:—

"M. ——, bailiff, has written to desire correction of the article on the Hanged Woman. *He* did not kill her, he says. We did not say that he did *kill* that unfortunate woman. We reprint that article:—

"M. ——, bailiff, having a writ out for a cabinet-maker in the Rue de la Lune, was seen by the latter from the house windows. He called out to his wife:—'I am lost, for there they come to arrest me!' His wife heard this, and fastened the door, while her husband hid himself in the loft. The bailiff called in a locksmith. The wife's room door was forced, and they found the woman had hanged herself! The sight of the corpse did not delay or prevent the officer hunting for the husband. 'I arrest you.' 'I have no money.' 'To prison, then.' 'Very well, let me give my wife good-bye.' 'That be hanged, like she is herself. She's dead.' What can you complain of, M. ——? we only print your own words, which minutely and blackly paint this frightful picture."

This same paper quotes three or four hundred facts, of which the following is a fair sample:—

"On collection of a 300-franc debt a warrant officer charged 964 francs! The debtor (a workman with five children), lay seven months in prison."

For two reasons, the present writer quotes from "*Le Pauvre Jacques*," firstly, to show that the chapter just read falls below reality; and again, to prove that, if merely in a philanthropic point of view, the maintenance of such a state of things (the exorbitance of extras, illegally extorted by public servants), often paralyzes the most generous intentions. For instance, with 1,000 francs there might be three or four honest though unfortunate workmen restored to their families from a prison whither petty debts of 250 or 500 francs had driven them; but these sums being tripled by a shameful exaggeration of costs, the most charitable persons often recoil from doing a good deed at the thought of two-thirds of their bounty merely going to sheriffs and their officers. And yet, there are few hardships more worthy of pity and relief than those befalling such unfortunate people as we speak of.

hundred francs; give back to this girl the money you have just received from her."

More and more surprised, the bailiff took the notes hesitatingly, examined them very suspiciously, turning them over and over, and finally pocketed them. But as his alarm and surprise began to subside, so did his natural coarseness return, and eyeing Rudolph from head to foot with an impertinent stare, he exclaimed, "Your notes are good; but how came the likes of you with so large a sum? I hope, at least, it is your own!" added he.

Rudolph was very humbly dressed, and covered with dust—thanks to his stay in Pipelet's loft.

"I have bidden you restore that gold to the young girl," answered Rudolph, in a sharp, stern voice.

"Bid me! Who give you the right to order me?" cried the bailiff, advancing towards Rudolph, in a threatening manner.

"The gold! the gold!" said the prince, seizing the fellow's wrist so violently that he winced under the iron hold, and cried out, "Oh, you hurt me! Hands off!"

"Restore the gold! you are paid. Take yourself off, without further insolence, or I will kick you to the foot of the stairs."

"Very well; here is the gold," said Malicorne, giving it to the girl; "but mind what you are about, young man—don't fancy you are going to do as you like with me, because you happen to be the strongest."

"That's right. Who are you, to give yourself such airs?" said Bourdin, sheltering himself behind his companion. "Who are you?"

"Who is he? He is my tenant, the king of tenants, you foul-mouthed wretches!" cried Mrs. Pipelet, who appeared at last, quite out of breath, still wearing the Brutus wig. In her hand she held an earthen pot, filled with boiling soup, which she was kindly taking to the Morels.

"What does this old polecat want?" said Bourdin.

"If you dare to pass any of your blackguard remarks on me, I'll make you feel my nails—and my teeth too, if necessary!" screamed Mrs. Pipelet: "and more than that, my lodger, my prince of lodgers, will pitch you from the top to the bottom of the staircase, as he says! And I will sweep you away like a heap of rubbish, as you are!"

"This old woman will rouse all the people in the house against us. We are paid, and our expenses also; let us be off!" said Bourdin to Malicorne.

"Here are your documents," said the last-named individual, throwing a bundle of papers at Morel's feet.

"Pick them up, and deliver them properly! You are paid for being civil," said Rudolph, seizing the bailiff with his vigorous hand, while with the other he pointed to the papers.

Convinced by this new and formidable grasp that he could not struggle against so powerful an adversary, the bailiff stooped down grumbling, picked up the bundle of papers, and gave them to Morel, who took them mechanically. The lapidary believed himself under the influence of a dream.

"Mind, young fellow, although you have an arm as strong as a porter's, never come under our lash!" said Malicorne. Shaking his fist at Rudolph, he nimbly jumped down the stairs, followed by his companion, who looked behind him with fear.

Mrs. Pipelet, burning for revenge on the bailiffs, for the insults offered to Rudolph, looked at her saucepan with an air of inspiration, and cried out, heroically: "Morel's debts are paid; they will now have plenty to eat, and no longer stand in need of my soup—heads!" Leaning over the banisters, the old woman emptied the contents of her saucepan on the backs of the bailiffs, who had just arrived at the first-floor landing.

"Oh, you are caught, I see!" added the portress. "They are soaked through like two sops! He! he! this is capital!"

"A thousand million thunders!" cried Malicorne, wet through with Mrs. Pipelet's culinary preparation. "Will you take care what you are about up there, you old baggage!"

"Alfred!" retorted Mrs. Pipelet, bawling in a voice sharp enough to split the tympanum of a deaf man. "Alfred! have at 'em, old darling! They wanted to behave improperly to thy 'Stasie! (Anastasie). Those rascals would take liberties with me! Pitch into them with your broom! call the oyster-woman, and the potboy next door to help you. Quick! — quick! — after them! Murder! police! thieves! Hish!—hish!—hish! Bravo! Halloo! go it, old darling! Broom!—broom!" By way of a formidable finish to these hootings, which she had accompanied with a violent stamping of her feet, Mrs. Pipelet, carried away by the intoxication of her victory, hurled from the top to the bottom of the staircase her earthenware saucepan, which, breaking with a loud, crashing noise, the very moment the bailiffs, stunned by the frightful cries, were taking the stairs four at a time, added greatly to their fears.

"Ha! ha! I rayther think you have got enough for once!" cried Anastasie, laughing loudly, and folding her arms in an attitude of triumph.

While Mrs. Pipelet was thus venting her rage upon the bailiffs, Morel, overcome with gratitude, had thrown himself at Rudolph's feet.

"Ah, sir, you have saved our lives! To whom do we owe this unlooked-for succour?"

"'*To* HIM *who watches over and protects honest men*,' as our immortal Béranger says."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

MISS DIMPLETON.

LOUISE, the lapidary's daughter, was possessed of remarkable loveliness; tall and graceful, she resembled the classic Juno for regularity of features, and the huntress Diana for the finish of her tall figure. In spite of her sunburnt complexion, her rough and freckled hands, beautifully formed, but hardened by domestic labour; in spite of her humble garments, this girl possessed a nobility of exterior.

We will not attempt to describe the gratitude and surprise of this family, so abruptly snatched from a fearful fate; in the first burst of happiness, even the death of the little girl was forgotten. Rudolph alone remarked the extreme paleness of Louise, and the utter abstraction with which she seemed oppressed, in spite of her father's deliverance. Wishing to completely satisfy the Morels as to apprehensions about the future, and to explain a liberality which might otherwise betray suspicions as to the character he thought proper to assume, Rudolph said to the lapidary, whom he took to the landing (while Miss Dimpleton broke to Louise the news of her sister's death), and said to him: "Yesterday morning a young lady came to see you."

"Yes, sir, and appeared much distressed at the situation in which she found us."

"It is to her you must return thanks, and not to me."

"Is it, indeed true, sir? That young lady——"

"Is your benefactress. I have often waited upon her with goods from our warehouse. The day before yesterday, while I was here, engaging an apartment on the fourth storey, I learnt from the portress your cruel position. Knowing this lady's charity, I went to her. She came, so that she might herself judge of the extent of your misfortunes, with which she was painfully moved; but as your situation might be the result of misconduct, she begged of me, as soon as possible, to make some inquiries respecting you, as she was desirous of apportioning her benefits according to your deserts."

"Good and excellent lady! I had reason to say——"

"As you observed to Madeleine: 'If the rich knew;' is it not so?"

"How, sir!—you know the name of my wife! Who told you that?"

"Since six o'clock this morning," said Rudolph, interrupting Morel, "I have been concealed in the little loft which adjoins your garret."

"You, sir!"

"Yes, and I have heard all that passed, my honest man."

"Oh, sir! but why were you there?"

"I could employ no better means of getting at your real character and sentiments. I wished to see and hear all, without your knowledge. The porter had spoken to me of this little nook, and offered it to me, that I might keep my wood in it. This morning I requested him to permit me to visit it; I remained there an hour, and I feel convinced that there does not exist a character more worthy, noble, and courageously resigned than yours."

"Nay, sir, indeed I cannot see much merit in my conduct: I was born honest, and cannot act otherwise than I have done."

"I know it; and for that reason I do not praise your conduct, but appreciate it. I had quitted the loft, to release you from the bailiffs, when I heard your daughter's voice. I wished to leave her the pleasure of saving you; unhappily, the rapacity of the bailiffs prevented poor Louise from enjoying so sweet a delight. I then made my appearance. Fortunately, I yesterday recovered several sums of money that were due to me, and I was able to make an advance to your benefactress, by paying for you this unfortunate debt. But your misfortunes are so great, so unmerited, and so nobly sustained, that the interest felt for you, and deserved, will not stop here. I can, in the name of your preserving angel, assure you of future repose, with happiness to you and yours."

"Is it possible? But at least tell me her name, sir—the name of this preserving angel, as you have called her."

"Yes, she is an angel; and you have still reason to say that the great and the lowly have their troubles."

"Is this lady, then, unhappy?"

"Who is there without their sorrows? But I see no cause to withhold her name. This lady is called——"

Remembering that Mrs. Pipelet knew that Lady d'Harville had come to her house to inquire for the Commander, Rudolph, fearing the indiscreet gossiping of the portress, said, after a moment's reflection: "I will tell you the name of this lady on one condition——"

"Oh, pray speak, sir!"

"It is, that you will repeat it to no one. You understand?—to no one."

"Oh, I will solemnly promise that to you. But cannot I at least offer my thanks to this saviour of the unhappy?"

"I will ask Lady d'Harville, and I doubt not she will give her consent."

"Then this lady is——"

"The Marchioness d'Harville."

"Oh, I shall never forget that name! It shall be my saint, my adoration! To think that, thanks to her, my wife and children are saved! saved!—no, not all, not all; my poor little Adèle, we shall never see her again. Alas! but it is necessary to remember, that any day we might have lost her, for she was

doomed." Here the poor lapidary brushed the tears from his eyes.

"As regards the last sad duties to be performed for this little one," said Rudolph, "trust to my advice; this is what must be done: I do not yet occupy my room, which is large, wholesome, and well aired. There is already a bed in it; we will convey thither all that is necessary for yourself and family to be established there till Lady d'Harville has arranged where to lodge you suitably. Your child's body will remain in the garret, where it shall to-night, as is customary, be attended and watched by a priest. I will go and request M. Pipelet to undertake the management of these sad duties."

"But, sir, it is not necessary to deprive you of your room. Now that we are in peace, and I no longer fear being taken to prison, our humble apartment appears to me a palace, particularly if my dear Louise remains with us, to attend to the family as formerly."

"Your Louise will not again leave you. You said not long ago it would be a luxury to have her always with you; as some recompense for your past sufferings, she shall never leave you again."

"Oh, sir, can it be possible? It surely cannot be a reality! My senses seemed lulled in a sweet dream. I have never thought much of religion, but this sudden change from so much misery to so much happiness shows the hand of an over-ruling Providence."

"And if a father's grief could be assuaged by promises of reward or recompense," said Rudolph, "I should remind you, that although the Almighty hand has removed one of your daughters from you, he has mercifully restored another."

"True, true, sir. Henceforth we shall have our dear Louise, to console us for the loss of poor little Adèle!"

"You will accept my chamber, will you not? If you refuse, how can we manage the mournful duties towards the poor child that is gone? Think also of your wife, whose mind is already so distracted—to leave her for four-and-twenty hours with such an afflicting spectacle before her eyes!"

"You think of everything—of all! How kind you are, sir!"

"It is your benefactress you must thank, for her goodness inspires me. I say to you as she would say, and I am sure she would approve of all; so it is agreed that you will accept the offer of my room. Now tell me, this Jacques Ferrand——"

A dark frown passed across Morel's face.

"This Jacques Ferrand," continued Rudolph, "is the same lawyer who resides in the Rue du Sentier?"

"Yes, sir; do you know him?" Then, his fears newly awakened on the subject of Louise, Morel exclaimed: "Since you have heard all that passed, sir, say, say—have I not a right to hate this man? And who knows, if my child, my Louise——"

He could not proceed; he hid his face with his hands. Rudolph understood his fears.

"The lawyer's proceedings," said he to him, "ought to reassure you, as he doubtless ordered your arrest, to be revenged for the scorn of your daughter; I have good reason, too, to believe that he is a dishonest man. If he is so," resumed Rudolph, after a moment's silence, "let us believe that Providence will punish him. If the justice of Heaven often appears to slumber, it awakens some time or other."

"He is very rich, and very hypocritical, sir."

"In your deepest despair, a guardian angel came to your assistance, and plucked you from inevitable ruin; so, at a moment when least expected, the Almighty Avenger may call upon the lawyer to atone for his past crimes, if he be guilty."

At this moment, Miss Dimpleton came from the garret, wiping her eyes. Rudolph said to the young girl: "Will it not, my good neighbour, be better that M. Morel should occupy my room, with his family, until his benefactress, whose agent I am, shall have provided a suitable lodging?"

Miss Dimpleton regarded Rudolph with a look of unfeigned surprise. "Oh, sir! are you really in earnest when you make so generous an offer?"

"Yes, but on one condition, which will depend on yourself."

"Oh, depend upon all that is in my power!"

"I had some accounts required in haste, to arrange for my employers; they will come for them soon. Now, if you will be so neighbourly as to permit me to work in your room, on a corner of your table, I should not disturb your work in the least, and the Morel family can, with the assistance of M. and Mrs. Pipelet, immediately be settled in my room."

"Oh, if it be only that, sir, most willingly; neighbours ought to assist each other. You have set so good an example by what you have done for that poor Morel, that I am at your service, sir."

"No, no, call me neighbour. If you use any ceremony towards me, I shall not have courage to intrude on you," said Rudolph.

"Well, then, it shall be so; I will call you 'neighbour,' because you really are so."

"Father, father!" cried one of Morel's little boys, coming out of the garret, "mother is calling you; come directly, pray do." The lapidary hastily entered the room.

"Now, neighbour," said Rudolph to Miss Dimpleton, "you must render me a still further service."

"With all my heart, if it be in my power."

"You are, I am sure, an excellent little housewife. It is necessary to purchase imme-

diately all that is wanted for Morel's family to be properly clothed, bedded, and settled in my room, for there is only sufficient for myself as a bachelor, that was brought yesterday. How can we manage to procure instantly, all I wish for the Morels?"

Miss Dimpleton thought for a moment, and answered: "In a couple of hours you can have all you want: good clothes ready-made, warm and neat, with good clean linen for all the family; two little beds for the children, and one for the grandmother—in short, all that is necessary; but it will cost a great deal of money."

"You don't say so! How much?"

"Oh, at least—at the very least—five or six hundred francs."

"For everything?"

"Yes, it is a great sum of money, you see," said Miss Dimpleton opening her large eyes, and shaking her head.

"And we can procure all these things——"

"In two hours."

"You must be a fairy, neighbour!"

"Oh, no, it is quite easy. The Temple is only two steps from here, where you will find all of which you are in want."

"The Temple?"

"Yes, the Temple."

"What place is that?"

"Don't know the Temple, neighbour?"

"No."

"It is, nevertheless, there where people like you and I furnish our rooms, and clothe ourselves, when we would be economical. Things are cheaper there than elsewhere, and quite as good."

"Really?"

"I assure you. Come, now, I suppose—— But what did you pay for this great-coat?"

"I do not know exactly."

"What, neighbour, can't tell how much your great-coat cost you?"

"I acknowledge to you, in confidence," said Rudolph, smiling, "that I owe for it; now you understand that I cannot know."

"Oh neighbour, neighbour, I fear you are a spendthrift!"

"Alas! neighbour!"

"You must alter in that respect, if you wish us to be good friends; and I already see that we shall be such, you appear so kind! You shall see that you will be glad to have me for a neighbour; for on that account, we can assist each other. I will take care of your linen, and you will help me clean my room. I rise very early, and will call you, so that you may not be late at your shop. I'll knock at the wall until you say to me: 'Good morning, neighbour.'"

"It is agreed; you shall wake me, take care of my linen, and I will clean your room."

"And you will be very neat?"

"Certainly."

"And when you wish to make any purchase, you will go to the Temple, because here is an example; your great-coat cost, I suppose, eighty francs; very well, you could have had it at the Temple for thirty."

"Why, that is marvellous! Then you think that with five or six hundred francs, these poor Morels——"

"Will be stocked with everything, first-class, for a long time to come."

"Neighbour, an idea has just struck me."

"Well, what is it about?"

"Do you understand household affairs—are you clever at making purchases?"

"Yes—rather so," said Miss Dimpleton, with a look of simplicity.

"Take my arm, and let us go to the Temple and buy wherewith to clothe the Morels: will that suit you?"

"Oh, what happiness! Poor creatures!—but where's the money?"

"I have sufficient."

"Five hundred francs?"

"The benefactress of the Morels has given me *carte blanche;* nothing is to be spared that these poor people require. Is there even a place where better things are to be had than at the Temple?"

"You will find nowhere better; then there is everything, and all ready-made—little frocks for the children, and dresses for their mother."

"Then let us go at once to the Temple, neighbour."

"Oh! but——"

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing; but you see, my time is every thing to me; and I am already a little behindhand, in occasionally nursing the poor woman Morel; and you may imagine that an hour in one way and an hour in another makes in time a day; a day brings thirty sous, and if we earn nothing one must still live all the same. But, pshaw! never mind; I must spare from my nights: and then, again, parties of pleasure are rare, and I will make this a joyful day; it will seem to me that I am rich, and that it is with my own money I am buying such good things for these poor Morels. Very well, as soon as I have put on my shawl and cap, I shall be at your service, neighbour."

"Suppose, during the time, I bring my papers to your room?"

"Willingly, and then you will see my apartment," said Miss Dimpleton, with pride; "for it is already put in order, and that will prove to you that I am an early riser, and that if you are sleepy and idle, so much the worse for you, for I shall be a troublesome neighbour."

So saying, light as a bird, she flew down the stairs, followed by Rudolph, who went to his room to brush off the dust he had carried away from Pipelet's loft. We will hereafter disclose to the reader how Rudolph was not yet informed of the abduction of Fleur-de-Marie, from Bouqueval farm, and why he had

not visited the Morels the day after the conversation with Lady d'Harville.

Rudolph, for the sake of appearances, furnished himself with a large roll of papers, which he carried into Miss Dimpleton's room.

Miss Dimpleton was nearly of the same age as Goualeuse, her former prison-friend. There was between these girls the same difference that exists between laughter and tears: between joyful carelessness and melancholy reverie; between daring improvidence and serious, incessant anticipation of the future; between a nature exquisitely delicate, elevated, poetic, morbidly sensitive, incurably wounded by remorse, and a disposition gay, lively, happy, unreflective, although good and compassionate; for, far from being selfish, Miss Dimpleton only cared for the griefs of others; with them she sympathized entirely, devoting herself, soul and body, to those who suffered: but, to use a common expression, her *back turned* on them, she thought no more about them. Often she interrupted a lively laugh to weep passionately, and checked her tears to laugh again. A real child of Paris, Miss Dimpleton preferred tumult to quiet, bustle to repose, the sharp, ringing harmony of the orchestra at the balls of the *Chartreuse* and the *Colysée*, to the soft murmur of wind, water, and trees; the deafening tumult of the streets of Paris, to the silence of the country; the dazzling of fireworks, the glittering of the flowers, the crash of the rockets, to the serenity of a lovely night—starlit, clear, and still. Alas! yes, this good girl preferred the black mud of the streets of the capital, to the verdure of its flowery meadows; its pavements miry or tortuous, to the fresh and velvet moss of the paths in the woods, perfumed by violets; the suffocating dust at the City gates, or the Boulevards, to the waving of the golden ears of corn, enamelled by the scarlet of the wild poppy and the azure of the blue-bell.

Miss Dimpleton never left home but on Sundays, and every morning laid in her provisions of chick-weed, bread, hempseed, and milk for her birds and herself, as Mrs. Pipelet observed. But she lived in Paris for the sake of Paris; she would have been miserable elsewhere than in the capital.

After a few words upon the personal appearance of the grisette, we will introduce Rudolph into his neighbour's apartment.

Miss Dimpleton had scarcely attained her eighteenth year: rather below the middle size, her figure was so gracefully formed and voluptuously rounded, harmonizing so well with a sprightly and elastic step, that an inch more in height would have spoiled the graceful symmetry that distinguished her. The movement of her pretty little feet, encased in faultless boots of black cloth, with rather stout sole, reminded you of the quick, pretty, and cautious tread of the quail or wagtail. She did not seem to walk, but to pass over the pavement as if she were gliding over its surface. This step, so peculiar to *grisettes*, at once nimble, attractive, and as if somewhat alarmed, may be attributed to three causes: their desire to be thought pretty, their fear of a too-plainly expressed admiration, and the desire they always have not to lose a minute in their peregrinations.

Rudolph had never seen Miss Dimpleton but by the sombre light in Morel's garret, or on the landing, equally obscure; he was therefore dazzled by the brilliant freshness of the girl, when he entered silently her room, lit by two large windows. He remained for an instant motionless, struck by the charming picture before him. Standing before a glass, placed over the chimney-piece, Miss Dimpleton had just finished tying under her chin the strings of a small cap of bordered tulle, trimmed with cherry-coloured ribbons. The cap, which fitted tightly, was placed far back on the head, and thus revealed two large thick braids of glossy hair, shining like jet, and falling very low in front. Her eye-brows, well-defined, seemed as if traced in ink, and were arched above large black eyes, full of vivacity and expression; her firm and downy cheeks were tinted with a lovely bloom, like a ripe peach sprinkled with the dew of morning. Her small, upturned, and saucy nose would have made the fortune of a Lisette or Marton; her mouth, rather large, with rosy lips and small white teeth, was full of laughter and sport; her cheeks were dimpled, and also her chin, not far from which was a little speck of beauty, a dark mole, *killingly* placed at the corner of her mouth. Between a very low worked collar and the border of the little cap, gathered in by a cherry-coloured ribbon, was seen beautiful hair, so carefully twisted and turned up, that its roots were as clear and as black as if they had been painted on the ivory of that tempting neck. A plum-coloured merino dress, with a plain back and tight sleeves, skilfully made by herself, covered a bust so thin and supple, that the young girl never wore a corset—for economy sake. An ease and unusual freedom in the smallest action of the shoulders and body, resembling the facile, undulating motions of a cat, evinced this peculiarity. Imagine a gown fitting tightly to a form rounded and polished as marble, and we must agree that Miss Dimpleton could easily dispense with the accessory to the dress of which we have spoken. The band of a small apron of dark green levantine formed a girdle round a waist which might have been spanned with your two hands.

Supposing herself to be quite alone (for Rudolph still remained at the door, motionless and unperceived), Miss Dimpleton, after having smoothed the bands of her hair with her small white hand, placed her little foot upon a chair, and stooped down to tighten her boot-lace. This attitude disclosed to Ru-

dolph a snow-white cotton stocking, and half of a beautifully formed leg.

After this detailed account, we may conclude that Miss Dimpleton had put on her prettiest cap and apron, to do honour to her neighbour on their visit to the Temple. The person of the pretended merchant's clerk was quite to her taste: his face, benevolent proud, and noble, pleased her greatly; and then he had shown so much compassion towards the poor Morels, in giving up his room to them, that, thanks to his kindness of heart, and perhaps also to his good looks, Rudolph, had made great steps in the confidence of the grisette, who, according to her ideas of the necessity of reciprocal obligations imposed on neighbours, esteemed herself fortunate that Rudolph had succeeded the commission-traveller, Cabrion, and François Germain; for she had begun to feel that the next room had been too long empty, and she feared, above all, that it would not be *agreeably* occupied.

Rudolph took advantage of his being unperceived, to throw a curious look around this room, which he found deserved more praise than Mrs. Pipelet had given to the extreme neatness of Miss Dimpleton's humble home. Nothing could be gayer or better arranged than this little room. A grey paper, with green flowers, covered the walls; the red-waxed floor shone like a mirror; a saucepan of white earthenware was on the hob, where was also arranged a small quantity of wood, cut so fine and small that you could well compare each piece to a large match. Upon the stone mantel-piece, representing grey marble, were placed for ornament two common flower-pots, painted an emerald green; a little wooden stand held a silver watch, which served in lieu of a clock. On one side shone a brass candlestick, bright as gold, ornamented with an end of wax candle; on the other side was one of those lamps formed of a cylinder, with a tin reflector, mounted upon a steel stem, with a leaden stand. A tolerably large glass, in a frame of black wood, surmounted the mantel. Curtains of green and grey chintz, bordered with worsted galloon, cut out and arranged by Miss Dimpleton, and placed on slight rods of black iron, draperied the windows; and the bed was covered with a quilt of the same make and material. Two glass-fronted cupboards, painted white and varnished, were placed each side of the recess; no doubt containing the household utensils—the portable stove, the broom, &c., &c.; for none of these necessaries destroyed the harmonious arrangement of the room.

A walnut chest of drawers, beautifully grained and well polished, four chairs of the same wood, a large table with one of those green cloth covers sometimes seen in country cottages, a straw-bottomed armchair, with a footstool—such was the unpretending furniture. There was too, in the recess in one of the windows, the cage of the two canaries, faithful companions of Miss Dimpleton. By one of those notable inventions which arise only in the minds of poor people, the cage was set in the middle of a large chest, a foot in depth, upon the table: this chest, which Miss Dimpleton called the garden of her birds, was filled with earth, covered with moss during the winter, and in the spring with turf and flowers. Rudolph gazed into this apartment with interest and curiosity; he perfectly comprehended the joyous humour of this young girl; he pictured the silence disturbed by the warbling of the birds, and the singing of Miss Dimpleton. In the summer, doubtless, she worked near the open window, half hidden by a verdant curtain of sweet pea, nasturtium, and blue and white morning glories; in the winter, she sat by the side of the stove, enlivened by the soft light of her lamp.

* * * *

Rudolph was thus far in these reflections, when, looking mechanically at the door, he noticed a strong bolt—a bolt that would not have been out of place on the door of a prison. This bolt caused him to reflect. It had two meanings, two distinct uses: to shut the door *upon* lovers within—to shut the door *against* lovers without. One of these uses would utterly contradict the assertions of Mrs. Pipelet—the other would confirm them. Rudolph had just arrived at these conclusions, when Miss Dimpleton, turning her head, perceived him, and, without changing her position, said: "What, neighbour! there you are, then!" Instantly the pretty leg disappeared under the ample skirt of the currant-coloured gown, and Miss Dimpleton added: "Caught you, Cunning!"

"I am here, admiring in silence."

"And what do you admire, neighbour?"

"This pretty little room, for you are lodged like a queen."

"Nay, you see, this is my enjoyment. I seldom go out; so at least I may please myself at home."

"But I do not find fault. What tasteful curtains! and the drawers—as good as mahogany! You must have spent heaps of money here."

"Oh, pray don't remind me of it! I had four hundred and twenty-six francs when I left prison, and almost all is gone."

"When you left prison?"

"Yes; it is quite a story. But you do not, I hope, think I was in prison for any crime?"

"Certainly not; but how was it?"

"After the cholera, I found myself alone in the world; I was then, I believe, about ten years of age."

"Until that time, who had taken care of you?"

"Oh, very good people; but they died of the cholera (here the large black eyes became tearful), the little they left was sold to dis-

charge two or three small debts, and I found that no one would shelter me. Not knowing what to do, I went to the guard-house, opposite where I had resided, and said to the sentinel: 'Soldier, my parents are dead, and I do not know where to go. What must I do?' The sub-officer came and took me to the magistrate, who sent me to prison as a vagabond, which I was allowed to quit at sixteen years of age."

"But your parents?"

"I do not know who was my father; I was six years old when I lost my mother, who had taken me from the Foundling Hospital, where she had been compelled at first to place me. The kind people of whom I have spoken lived in our house; they had no children, and, seeing me an orphan, took care of me."

"And how did they live? What was their condition in life?"

"Papa Crétu, so I always called him, was a house-painter, and the female who lived with him worked at her needle."

"Then they were tolerably well off?"

"Oh, as well off as most people in their station. Though not married, they called each other husband and wife. They had their ups and downs; to-day in abundance, if there was plenty of work; to-morrow straitened, if there was not any; but that did not prevent them from being contented and gay (at this remembrance Miss Dimpleton's face brightened). There was nowhere near a house like it—always cheerful, always singing; and with all that, good and kind beyond belief! What was theirs, was for others also. Mamma Crétu was a plump body of thirty, clean as a new penny, lively as an eel, merry as a finch. Her husband was a regular jolly old King Cole; he had a large nose, a large mouth, always a paper cap on his head, and a face so droll—oh, so droll, that you could not look at him without laughing! When he returned home after work he did nothing but sing, make faces, and gambol like a child. He made me dance, and jump upon his knees; he played with me as if he were my own age, and his wife entirely spoilt me. Both required of me but one thing—to be good-humoured; and in that, thank God! I never disappointed them: so they baptized me, *D*impleton (not *S*impleton, neighbour!) and the cap fitted. As to gaiety, they set me the example: never did I see them sad. If they uttered reproaches at all, it was the wife said to her husband: 'Stop, Crétu, you make me laugh too much!' or he said to her: 'Hold your tongue, Ramonette (I do not know why he called her Ramonette), you will make me ill, you are so funny!' And as for me, I laughed to see them laugh. That's how I was brought up, and how my character was formed; I trust I have profited by it!"

"To perfection, neighbour! Then they never quarrelled?"

"Never; oh, the biggest kind of never! Sunday, Monday, sometimes Tuesday, they had, as they called it, an *outing*, and took me always with them. Papa Crétu was a very good workman: when employed, he could earn what he pleased, and so could his wife too. As soon as they had sufficient for the Sunday and Monday, and could live till then, well or ill, they were satisfied. After that, if they were on short allowance, they were still contented. I remember that, when we had only bread and water, Papa Crétu used to take out of his library——"

"He had a library?"

"So he called a little chest, where he put his collections of new songs; for he bought all the new songs, and knew them all. When there was nothing in the house but bread, he would take from his library an old cookery-book, and say to us: 'Let us see what we will have to eat to-day—this or that?' and he would read to us a list of many good things. Each chose their dish. Papa Crétu would then take an empty stew-pan, and with the drollest manner and the funniest jests in the world, pretend to put in all the ingredients necessary to make a good stew, and seemed to pour it into a plate, also empty, which he would place on the table, always with grimaces that made us hold our sides; then, taking his book again, he would read, for example, the receipt for a good fricassée of chicken that we had chosen, and that made our mouths water; we then eat our bread (while he read), laughing like so many mad things."

"And were they in debt?"

"Not at all! As long as they had money they feasted: when they had none they dined on *water-colour*, as Papa Crétu called it."

"And did they not think of the future?"

"Oh, yes, they thought of it; but then our present and future were like Sunday and Monday—summer we spent gaily and happily outside the City, the winter we got over at home."

"Since these poor people agreed so well together, why did they not marry?"

"One of their friends once asked the same question, before me."

"Well?"

"They answered: 'If we should ever have children, we will marry; but we are very well as we are. What is the good of compelling us to do that which we now do willingly? Besides, it is expensive, and we have no money to spare.' But see how I am gossiping! as I always do on the subject of those good people, who were so kind to me, for I never tire of speaking of them. Here, neighbour, be civil enough to take my shawl, which is on the bed, and fasten it under the collar of my dress with this large pin, and we will then go, for we shall be some time selecting all you wish to purchase for the Morels."

Rudolph hastened to obey the instructions;

he took from the bed a large plaid shawl, and carefully arranged it on his neighbour's lovely shoulders.

"Now then, lift up the collar a little, press the dress and shawl close together, and stick in the pin. Above all, take care not to prick me."

The prince executed the given instructions with zealous nicety; then he observed, smilingly, to the grisette, "Oh, Miss Dimpleton, I must not be your *femme de chambre* —there is danger in it!"

"Yes, yes," answered Miss Dimpleton, gaily, "there is great danger of my having a pin run into me! But now," added she, after they had left the room and locked the door after them; "here, neighbour, take the key; it is so very heavy, that I always fear it will tear my pocket. It is quite a pistol for size!" And then she laughed merrily.

Rudolph accordingly took possession of an enormous key—such a one as is sometimes seen in those allegorical representations where the vanquished offer the keys of their cities to the conquerors. Although Rudolph believed himself sufficiently changed by years not to be recognized by Polidori, he yet pulled up the collar of his coat before passing the door of the quack Bradamanti.

"Neighbour, don't forget to tell M. Pipelet that some goods will be brought here, which must be taken to your room," said Miss Dimpleton,

"You are right, neighbour; we will step into the lodge as we pass by."

Pipelet, his everlasting immense hat, as usual, on his head, dressed in his green coat, was sitting gravely before a table, on which were spread pieces of leather and fragments of old shoes; he was occupied in putting a new sole to a boot, which he did with that serious and meditative air which characterized all his doings. Anastasie was absent from the lodge.

"Well, M. Pipelet," said Miss Dimpleton, "I trust things will be better now! Thanks to my neighbour, the poor Morels were rescued from trouble just as those heartless bailiffs were about to drag the unhappy man to prison."

"Oh! these bailiffs are really without hearts, or manners either, mademoiselle," added Pipelet, in an angry voice, flourishing the boot he was repairing, in which he had thrust his left hand and arm. "No! I do not fear to repeat, in the face of heaven and man, that they are without manners; they took advantage of the darkness of the staircase to make rude remarks on my wife's very person. On hearing the cries of her offended modesty, in spite of myself, I yielded to the impulse of my temper. I do not disguise it, my first movement was to remain perfectly motionless."

"But afterwards you followed them, I hope, M. Pipelet?" said Miss Dimpleton, who had some trouble to preserve a serious air.

"I thought of it," answered Pipelet, with a deep sigh; "but when those shameless ruffians passed before my door, my blood rose, and I could not hinder myself from putting my hand before my eyes, to hide the monsters from my sight! But that does not surprise me; I knew something unfortunate would happen to me to-day, for I dreamed—last night—of Monster Cabrion!"

Miss Dimpleton smiled, as Pipelet's painful sighs were mingled with the taps of the hammer, which he vigorously applied to the sole of the old boot.

"You truly acted the part of a wise man, my dear M. Pipelet, that of despising offences, and holding it beneath you to revenge them. But let us forget these miserable bailiffs. Will you be kind enough to do me a favour?" asked Rudolph.

"Man is born to assist his fellow-man," replied Pipelet, in a sententious and melancholy tone; "and more particularly so when his fellow-man is so good a lodger as yourself."

"It will be necessary to take up to my room different things which will be brought here presently for the Morels."

"Be assured I will take charge of them," replied Pipelet, "and faithfully carry out your wishes."

"And afterwards," said Rudolph, sadly, "you must obtain a priest to watch by the little girl the Morels have lost in the night. Go and register her death, and order a decent funeral. Here is money; spare not, for Morel's benefactress, whose mere agent I am, wishes all to go well."

"Make your mind quite easy, sir," replied Pipelet; "directly my wife comes back, I will go to the mayor, the church, and the ham-and-beef shop—to the church for the soul of the dead, to the cookshop for the body of the living," added Pipelet, philosophically and poetically. "You may consider it done—already done, in both cases, my good sir."

At the entrance, Rudolph and Miss Dimpleton found themselves face to face with Anastasie, who had returned from market, bearing a heavy basket of provisions.

"Well done!" exclaimed the portress, looking at them both with a knowing and significant air; "already arm-in-arm! That's your sort! Young people will be young people—and where's the harm? To a pretty lass, a handsome lad! If you don't enjoy yourselves while young, you will find it difficult to do so when you get old! My poor dear Alfred and I, for instance, when we were young, didn't we go the pace—— But now, oh, dear! oh, dear!—Well never mind; go along, my dears, and make yourselves happy while you can. Love for ever!" The old woman disappeared in the darkness of the alley, calling out, "Alfred, do not grumble, old darling! Here is 'Stasie, who brings you good things—rare dainties!"

The young couple had left the house.

* * * * * *

To the mind of Rudolph, for Miss Dimpleton was too little prone to mournful impressions to long reflect on the matter, the trouble of the Morels had ceased; but, in the grim reality, a calamity, ten-fold severer than their direst poverty, was gathering and forming nearer them, ready to burst upon their heads, almost before the gay young couple would return from their stroll. What this great evil was, and what fate befalls other characters yet to be introduced, will presently be revealed, in shadow and by sunshine.

The Slasher, the Schoolmaster, the Screech-Owl, Hoppy, and the other wretches whose misdeeds blacken these pages, form the foil; while Fleur-de-Marie, Clémence d'Harville, Miss Dimpleton, and Mrs. George are the gems, which will be seen to shed their lustre and charm over the no less interesting pages of the Second Division of this work, entitled, "*Part Second:* NOON."

END OF PART I.

THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS.

NOON.

CHAPTER I.

THE ARREST.

TO the snow of the past night had succeeded a very sharp wind; so that the pavement of the streets, usually muddy, was almost dry, as Rudolph and Miss Dimpleton directed their steps towards the extensive and singular bazaar called the Temple. The girl leant without ceremony upon the arm of her cavalier, with as little restraint as though they had been intimate for a long time.

"Isn't Mrs. Pipelet funny," said the grisette to Rudolph, "with the odd remarks she makes?"

"Indeed, neighbour, I think she is quite right."

"In what?"

"Why, when she said: 'Young people will be young people—and where's the harm?—Love for ever!'"

"Well?"

"Well! I mean to say that I perfectly agree with her."

"Agree with her!"

"Yes, I should like nothing better than to pass my youth with you, taking '*Love for ever!*' for my motto.

"I believe it; you are not difficult to please."

"Where is the harm? We are neighbours."

"If we were not neighbours, I should not walk out with you in this way."

"Then allow me to hope——"

"Hope what?"

"That you will learn to love me."

"I love you already."

"Really?"

"To be sure I do, and for a very simple reason. You are good and lively; although poor yourself, you do all you can for those unfortunate Morels, in interesting rich people in their behalf; you have a face that pleases me much, and a well-turned figure, which is agreeable and flattering to me, as I shall frequently accept your arm. Here are, I think, a many reasons that I should love you."

Then interrupting herself to enjoy a hearty laugh, Miss Dimpleton cried: "Look! look at that fat woman, with her old furred shoes; one could imagine her drawn along by two cats without tails!" And again she laughed merrily.

"I prefer looking at you, neighbour; I am so happy in thinking you already love me."

"I tell you so, because it is so; if you did not please me, I should say so all the same. I cannot reproach myself with having ever deceived or flattered any one; when people please me, I tell them so at once."

Then interrupting herself again, to stop before a shop-window, the grisette exclaimed, "Oh, look at that beautiful clock, and those two pretty vases! I have already saved up three francs and a half towards buying some like them. In five or six years I may be able to manage it."

"Saved up, neighbour? Then you earn——"

"At least thirty sous a day—sometimes forty, but I only reckon upon thirty; it is more prudent, and I regulate my expenses accordingly," said Miss Dimpleton, with an air as important as though it related to the transactions of a financier.

"But, with thirty sous a day, how can you manage to live?"

"The reckoning is not difficult; shall I explain it to you, neighbour? You appear rather extravagant, so it may serve you as an example."

"Let's hear it."

"Thirty sous a day will make forty-five francs a month, will it not?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, by that account I have twelve francs for lodging, and twenty-three francs for living."

"Twenty-three francs for a month's living!"

"Yes, quite as much. I acknowledge that, for a person like myself, it is enormous; but then, you see, I refuse myself nothing."

"Oh, you little glutton!"

"Ah, but I also include food for my birds."

"Certainly, if you reckon for three, it is less extravagant. But let me hear the detail of your every-day management, that I may benefit by the instruction."

"Listen then. A pound of bread, that is four sous: milk, two sous—that makes six four sous for vegetables in winter, or fruit and salad in summer (I doat on salad and vegetables, because they do not soil the hands)—there is already ten sous; three sous for butter, or oil and vinegar, as seasoning—thirteen sous; two pailfuls of water (oh, that is my luxury!) that will make fifteen sous; add to that, two sous for chickweed and hempseed for my two birds, which usually share with me my bread and milk—that is twenty-two or twenty-three francs a month, neither more nor less."

"And do you never eat meat?"

"Oh, Lord! Meat, indeed! that costs ten to twelve sous a pound; how can I think of that? Besides, it smells of the kitchen, of the stewpan; instead of which, milk, fruit, and vegetables, require no cooking. I will tell you a dish I am very fond of, not troublesome, and which I make to perfection."

"Hold up the dish!"

"I put fine potatoes in the oven of my stove; when they are done, I mash them with a little butter and milk, and a pinch of salt. It is a meal for the gods! If you are well behaved, I will let you taste them some day."

"Prepared by your pretty hands, it cannot fail to be excellent. But let us see, neighbour; we have already reckoned twenty-three francs for living, and twelve francs for lodging—that makes thirty-five francs a month."

"Well, then, out of the forty-five or fifty francs I earn, there remain to me ten or fifteen francs for wood and oil during winter, as well as for my dress and washing—that is to say, for soap—as, excepting my sheets, I wash for myself: that is another luxury—a laundress would pretty well ruin me; and as I also iron very well, I thereby save my money. During the five winter months, I burn a load and a half of wood, and four or five sous-worth of oil in the day for my lamp; that makes nearly eighty francs a year for my light and fire."

"So that there remains to you more than a hundred francs for your clothing?"

"Yes; and it is from that I have saved the three francs and a half."

"But your dresses—your shoes and stockings—this pretty cap?"

"My caps I only wear when I go out, and that does not ruin me, for I make them myself; at home, I am satisfied with my hair. As to my dresses and boots—is there not the Temple?"

"Oh, yes, that convenient, excellent Temple! Well, you buy there——"

"Very good and pretty dresses. You must know that rich ladies are accustomed to give their old dresses to their waiting-maids—when I say old, I mean that may be they have worn them in their carriages a month or two—and their servants go and sell them to people who keep shops at the Temple for almost nothing. Thus, you see, I have a nice merino dress that I bought for fifteen francs, which perhaps cost sixty; it had hardly been put on, and is beautifully fine. I altered it to fit me, and I flatter myself it does me credit."

"Indeed you do it much credit! Thanks to the resources of the Temple, I begin to think you can manage to dress respectably with a hundred francs a year."

"To be sure I can. Why I can buy charming dresses for five or six francs; and boots, the same that I have on now, and almost new, for two or three francs. Look! would not any one say that they were made for me?" said Miss Dimpleton, stopping, and showing the tip of her pretty little foot, very nicely set off by the well-made and well-fitting boot.

"The foot is charming, truly; but you must find a difficulty in fitting it. After that, you will doubtless tell me they sell children's shoes at the Temple."

"You are a sad flatterer, neighbour; however, after what I have told you, you will acknowledge that a girl, quite alone and well, can live respectably on thirty sous a day? I must tell you, by-the-bye, the four hundred and fifty francs which I brought from prison assisted materially in establishing me. When once known that I possessed furniture, it inspired confidence, and I had work entrusted to me to take home; but it was necessary to wait a long time before I could meet with employment. Fortunately, I kept sufficient money to live upon for three months, without earning anything."

"Spite of your gay, heedless manner, allow me to say that you possess a great deal of good sense, neighbour."

"Nay, when one is alone in the world, and would not be under obligation to any one, you must exercise some management to build your nest well, and take care of it when it is built, as the saying is."

"And your nest is delightful!"

"Is it not? for, as I have said, I refuse myself nothing; I consider I have a lodging above my station. Then, again, I have birds; in summer always at least two pots of flowers on the mantel-piece, besides the boxes in the windows; and then, as I told you, I had three francs and more in my money-box, towards ornaments I hoped one day to be able to purchase for the chimney-piece."

"And what became of these savings?"

"Why, latterly I have seen those poor Morels so unhappy, so very unhappy, that I said to myself: 'There is no sense in having these ugly pieces of money idling in a box, whilst good people are perishing of hunger beside you,' so I lent them to Morel. When I say lent, I mean I told him I only lent them, in order to spare his feelings, for I assure you I gave them freely."

"Yes, neighbour, but as they are no longer in want, you surely will not refuse to allow them to repay you?"

"True, I shall not refuse it; it will be something towards the purchase of chimney-ornaments—my dream."

"And then, again, you ought to think a little of the future."

"The future?"

"Should you fall ill, for instance."

And, at the bare idea, Miss Dimpleton burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, so loud, that a fat man, who was walking before her, carrying a dog under his arm, turned round quite angrily, believing himself to be the butt. Miss Dimpleton, resuming her composure, made a half-curtesy to the stout person, and pointing to the animal under his arm, said: "Is your dog so very tired, sir?"

The fat man grumbled something, and continued his walk.

"Come, come, neighbour," said Rudolph; "are you losing your senses?"

"It is your fault if I am."

"My fault?"

"Yes; because you say such silly things to me."

"What, because I tell you that you may fall ill?"

"I ill?"

"Why not?"

"Am I a likely-looking person to be sick then?"

"Never have I beheld a face more rosy and fresh!"

"Very well, then, why do you think I shall be ill?"

"Nay, but——"

"At eighteen years of age, leading the life I do, how can that be possible? I rise at five o'clock, winter and summer; I go to bed at ten or eleven; I eat to satisfy my hunger, which is not very great, it is true; I sing like a lark all day, and at night I sleep like a dormouse; I have a mind free, joyful, and contented, with the certainty of plenty of work because my employers are pleased with what I have done. Why should I be sick? What an idea! Well, I never!"

And Miss Dimpleton again relapsed into long and hearty laughter. Rudolph, struck with this blind, yet happy confidence in the future, reproached himself with having attempted to shake it. He thought, with horror, that an illness of a month could ruin this merry, peaceful mode of existence. Miss Dimpleton's deep faith in her health and her eighteen years, her only treasures, appeared to Rudolph something akin to holiness; for, on the young girl's part, it was neither carelessness nor improvidence, but an instinctive reliance on the commiseration of Divine justice, which could not abandon an industrious and virtuous creature, whose only error was a too confident dependence on the youth and health she enjoyed. The birds, as they cleave with gay and agile wings the azure skies in spring, or skim lightly over the blooming fields, do they think of the cheerless winter?

"Then," said Rudolph to the grisette, "you are not ambitious to possess more than you have?"

"Nothing."

"Absolutely nothing?"

"No—that is to say, I should like to have my chimney ornaments, and I shall have them, though I do not know when; but I have it in my head to possess them, and I will, if I should have to sit up to work all night to do it."

"And besides these ornaments——"

"I want for nothing; I cannot recollect a single thing more that I care about possessing now."

"How now?"

"Because, if you had asked me the same question yesterday, I should have told you I was longing for a suitable neighbour, so that I could arrange with him comfortably, as I have always done, to perform little services for him, that he might return nice little attentions to me."

"Well, it is already agreed, my pretty neighbour, that you shall take charge of my linen, and that I shall clean your room—without naming your waking me early in the morning, by tapping at the wall."

"And do you think that will be all?"

"What else is there?"

"Oh, bless your heart, you have not arrived at the end of what I expect of you. Is it not necessary that on Sundays you take me for a walk on the Boulevards?—you know that is the only day I have for recreation?"

"To be sure. In summer we will go into the country."

"No, I detest the country. I like no place so well as Paris. Nevertheless, I went, once upon a time, out of good-nature, with a young friend of mine, who was my companion in prison, to visit Meudon and Saint Germain. My friend was a very pleasant, good girl, whom they called Sweet-throat, because she was always singing."

"And what has become of her?"

"I do not know. She spent all the money she brought from prison, without appearing to be much amused; she was always sad, but sympathizing and charitable. When we used to go out together, I had not then any work; but when I succeeded in obtaining some, I did not stir from home. I gave her my address, but as she has not been to see me, doubtless she has also some occupation, and, like me, is too busy to get out. I only mention this to let you know, neighbour, that I love Paris above every other place. So whenever you can, on Sunday, you may take me to dine at the ordinary, sometimes to the play; or, if you have not any money, you can take me to see the fashionable shops, which will amuse me almost as much. Rest satisfied, that in our little excursions I shall not disgrace you. You will see how smart I shall look in my pretty dress of blue levantine, that I only wear on Sundays: it suits me to perfection. With that I wear a pretty little cap, trimmed with lace and orange-coloured ribbon, which does not contrast badly with my black hair; satin boots, that I had made for me; an elegant shawl of silk imitation Cashmere! Indeed, I expect, neighbour, people will turn round to look after us as we pass along. Men will say: 'Really that is a pretty little girl, upon my word!' And the women, on their part, will exclaim: 'Look at that tall young man! what an elegant shape! He has an air that is truly fashionable! and his little brown moustache becomes him exceedingly.' And I shall be of their opinion for I adore moustaches. Unfortunately, M. Germain did not wear one, because of the situation he held. M. Cabrion did, but then

it was red, like his long beard, and I do not like those great beards; besides, he made himself so ridiculously conspicuous in the streets, and teazed poor M. Pipelet so much. Now, M. Giraudeau, who was my neighbour before M. Cabrion, dressed well, and altogether had a very good appearance, but he squinted. At first it annoyed me very much, because he always appeared to be looking at some one at the side of me, and without thinking, I often turned round to see who——" And again Miss Dimpleton laughed.

Rudolph, as he listened to this prattle, asked himself, for the third or fourth time, what he ought to think of the *virtue* of Miss Dimpleton. Sometimes the frankness of the grisette and the remembrance of the large bolt, made him almost believe that she loved her neighbours merely as *brothers* or *companions*, and that Mrs. Pipelet had calumniated her; then again he smiled at his credulity, in thinking it probable that a girl so young, so pretty, so solitary, should have escaped the seductions of Giraudeau, Cabrion, and Germain. Still, for all that, Miss Dimpleton's frankness and originality disposed him to think favourably of her.

"You delight me, neighbour, by your manner of disposing of my Sundays," said Rudolph, gaily; "we will have some famous treats."

"Stop a moment, Mr. Spendthrift. I warn you that I shall keep house. In summer, we can dine very well—yes, very well—for three francs, at the Chartreuse or at the Montmartre Hermitage, half a dozen country dances, or valses included, with a ride upon the wooden horses;—oh, I do so love riding on horseback! That will make up your five francs—not a farthing more, I assure you. Do you waltz?"

"Very well."

"Oh, this pleases me! M. Cabrion always trod on my feet, and then for fun he would throw fulminating balls on the ground, which was the reason they would not let him go any more to the Chartreuse."

"Be assured, I will answer for my discretion wherever we go together; and as to the fulminating balls, I will have nothing to do with them. But in winter, what shall we do?"

"In winter, we are less hungry, and can dine luxuriously for forty sous; then we shall have three francs left for the play, for I would not have you exceed a hundred sous—that is indeed too much to spend in pleasure; but if alone, you would spend much more at the wine-shop or the billiard-rooms, with low fellows, who smell horribly of tobacco. Is it not better to pass the day pleasantly with a young friend, very laughter-loving and discreet, who will save you some expense, by hemming your cravats, and taking care of your other little domestic affairs?"

"It is clearly a gaining for me, neighbour; only if my friends should meet me with my pretty little friend on my arm, what then?"

"Well, they will look at us and say: 'He is not at all unlucky, that rogue Rudolph!'"

"You know my name?"

"Why, to be sure I do. When I learnt that the next room was let, I asked to whom."

"Yes, when people meet us together, no doubt, as you say, they will remark: 'What a lucky fellow that Rudolph is!' and will envy me."

"So much the better!"

"They will think me perfectly happy!"

"Of course they will; and so much the better!"

"And if I should not be so happy as I seem?"

"What does that matter, provided they believe it; men require nothing further than mere outward show."

"But your reputation?"

Miss Dimpleton burst into an immoderate fit of laughter.

"The reputation of a grisette! Would any one believe in such a phenomenon?" answered she. "If I had father or mother, brother or sister, for them I should be careful of what people would say; but I am alone in the world, and it's my own look-out. As long as I am satisfied with myself, I don't care a snap for others!"

"But still I should be very uncomfortable."

"What for?"

"In being thought happy in having you for a companion, while, on the contrary, I love you. It would be something like taking dinner with Papa Crétu—eating dry bread, whilst a cookery book was being read to me."

"Nonsense, nonsense! You will be very happy to live after my fashion. I shall prove so mild, grateful, and unwearying, that you will say: 'After all, it is as well to pass my Sunday with her as with any one else.' If you should be disengaged in the evenings during the week, and it would not annoy you, you might pass them in my room, and have the advantage of my fire and lamp; you could hire romances, and read them aloud to me. Better than go and lose your money at billiards. Otherwise, if you were kept late at your business, or you liked better to go to the *café*, you could wish me good night on your return, if I were still up. But should I be in bed, at an early hour next day I would say good morning, by tapping at the wall to wake you. M. Germain, my last neighbour, spent all his evenings in that manner with me, and did not complain; he read all Walter Scott's works to me, which were very interesting. Sometimes on Sunday, when the weather was bad, instead of leaving home, he bought something nice, and we made a downright banquet in my room; after which we amused ourselves with reading, and I was almost as much pleased as if I had been at the theatre. This is to show you that it would not be difficult to live with me, and that I will do what I can to make things pleasant and agreeable. And then, you who talk of illness, if ever you

should be laid up, I'll be a real Sister of Charity; only ask the Morels what sort of a nurse I am! So, you see, you are not aware of all your happiness; it is as good as a lucky hit in the lottery to have me for a neighbour."

"That is true, I have always been lucky; but, speaking of M. Germain, where is he now?"

"In Paris, I believe."

"Then you never see him now?'

"Since he left this house, he has not been to see me."

"But where does he live, and what is he doing?"

"Why do you ask those questions, neighbour?"

"Because I feel jealous of him," said Rudolph, smiling, "and I would——"

"Jealous!" exclaimed Miss Dimpleton, laughing. "There is no reason for that, poor fellow!"

"Seriously, then, I have the greatest interest in knowing the address of M. Germain; you know where he lives, and I may, without boasting, add, that I am incapable of abusing the secret I ask of you; it will be for his interest also."

"Seriously, neighbour, I believe you wish every good to M. Germain, but he made me promise not to give his address to any one; therefore, be assured, that as I do not give it to you, it is because I cannot. You ought not to be angry with me; if you had entrusted a secret to me, you would be pleased to find I acted as I am now doing."

"But——"

"Stop, neighbour! Once for all, do not speak to me any more on that subject; I have made a promise, I intend to keep it, and, whatever you may say to me, I shall still answer you in the same way."

In spite of her giddiness and frivolity, the girl pronounced these last words so decisively, that Rudolph felt, to his great regret, that he would never obtain from her the desired information about Germain; and he felt a repugnance to employ artifice in surprising her confidence. He paused a moment, and then resumed: "Do not let us speak of it again, neighbour. Upon my soul, you keep so well the secrets of others, that I am no longer surprised at your keeping your own."

"Secrets! I have secrets! I wish I had some; it must be so very amusing."

"Do you mean to say that you have not a little secret of the heart?"

"A secret of the heart!"

"In a word, have you never loved?" said Rudolph, looking steadfastly at Miss Dimpleton, to read the truth in her tell-tale face.

"Loved!—have I not loved M. Giraudeau, M. Cabrion, M. Germain, and you?"

"And did you love them the same as you love me—neither more nor less?"

"Oh, I cannot tell you that, exactly—less, perhaps; for I had to habituate myself to the squint of M. Giraudeau, to the red beard and disagreeable jests of M. Cabrion, and the melancholy of M. Germain, for he was so very sad, poor young man; while you, on the contrary, pleased me instantly."

"You will not feel angry, neighbour, if I speak to you as a friend?"

"Oh, no, don't be afraid—I am very good-natured; and then you are so kind, that I am sure you have not the heart to say anything that would cause me pain."

"Certainly not; but now, frankly, have you never had—a lover?"

"Lovers! Now, is that very likely? Have I time for that?"

"But what has time to do with it?"

"Everything. First of all, I should be as jealous as a tiger, and I should be constantly worrying myself with one idea or the other. Then again, do I earn money enough to enable me to lose two or three hours a day in grief and tears?—and if he deceived me, what weeping, what sorrow! All that would throw me pretty well behindhand, you may guess."

"But all lovers are not unfaithful, and do not cause their mistress to weep."

"That would be still worse. If he were very good and loving, could I live a moment away from him? And then, as most likely he would be obliged to stay all day, either at the desk, manufactory, or shop, I should be like a poor restless spirit during his absence. I should invent a thousand chimeras; imagine that others loved him, and that he was with them. Heaven only knows what I might be tempted to do in my despair! Certain it is, that my work would be neglected, and what would become of me then? I can manage, quiet as I am, to live by working twelve or fourteen hours a day; but, were I to lose two or three days in the week by tormenting myself, how could I make up the lost time? Impossible! I must then take a situation. Oh, no, I love my liberty too well."

"Your liberty?"

"Yes; I could enter as forewoman to the person who now employs me; I should receive four hundred francs a year, with board and lodging."

"And you will not accept that?"

"No, indeed. I should be dependent on others; instead of which, however humble my home may be, it is my own. I owe no one anything; I have courage, health, and gaiety; with an agreeable neighbour like yourself, what do I want more?"

"Then you have never thought of marrying?"

"I marry! I could only expect to meet with a husband as poor as myself; and look at the unhappy Morels—see where it ends! When you have but yourself to look to, you can always manage somehow."

"Then you never build castles in the air—never dream?"

"Yes, I dream of my chimney ornaments; besides them, what can I desire?"

But suppose, now, some relation, of whom you have never heard, should die and leave you a fortune—say twelve hundred francs a year—to you, who live upon five hundred francs ——"

"It might prove a good thing—perhaps an evil."

"An evil?"

"I am very happy as I am; I can enjoy the life I now lead, but I do not know how I should pass my time if I were rich. After a hard day's work, I go to bed, my lamp extinguished, and, by a few light embers that remain in my stove, I see my room neat—curtains, drawers, chairs, birds, watch, and my table spread with goods entrusted to me—and then I say to myself: 'All this I owe to myself.' Truly, neighbour, these thoughts cradle me softly, and sometimes I go to sleep with pride, always with content. But here we are at the Temple! You must confess, now, that it is a superb show!"

Although Rudolph did not participate in the deep veneration expressed by Miss Dimpleton at the sight of the Temple, he was nevertheless struck by the singular appearance of this enormous bazaar, with its numerous divisions and passages. Towards the middle of the Rue du Temple, not far from a fountain which was placed in the angle of a large square, might be seen an immense parallelogram built of timber, surmounted with a slated roof. That building is the Temple. Bounded on the left by the Rue du Petit Thouars, on the right by the Rue Percée, it finished in a vast rotunda, surrounded with a gallery, forming a sort of arcade. A long opening, intersecting this parallelogram in its length, divided it in two equal parts; these were in their turn divided and sub-divided by little lateral and transverse courts, sheltered from the rain by the roof of the edifice. In this bazaar new merchandize is generally prohibited; but the smallest rag of any stuff, the smallest piece of iron, brass, or steel, there found its buyer or seller.

There you saw dealers in scraps of cloth of all colours, ages, shades, qualities, and fashion, to assimilate either with worn-out or ill-fitting garments. Some of the shops presented mountains of old shoes, some trodden down at heel, others twisted, torn, split, and in holes, presenting a mass of nameless, formless, colourless objects, among which were grimly visible some species of *fossil* soles, about an inch thick, studded with thick nails like a prison door, and hard as a horse-shoe, the actual skeletons of shoes whose other component parts had long since been devoured by Time. Yet all this mouldy, rusty, dried-up accumulation of decaying rubbish found a willing purchaser, an extensive body of *merchants* trading in this particular line.

There existed retailers of trimming, fringes, cords, ravellings of silk, cotton, or thread, during the destruction of curtains, &c., rendered unfit for use. Other industrious persons occupied themselves in the business of women's bonnets: these bonnets never came to their shop but in the bags of the retailer, after the most singular changes, the most extraordinary tranformations, the most unheard-of discolourations. To prevent the merchandise taking up too much room in a shop usually of the size of a large box, they folded these bonnets in two, after which they smoothed them and pressed them down excessively tight—saving the salt, it is positively the same process as is used in the preservation of herrings: thus you may imagine how much, thanks to this method of stowage, may be contained in a space of four square feet.

When the purchaser presents himself, they withdraw these bags from the pressure to which they are subject; the merchant, with a careless air, gives a slight push with his fist to the bottom of the crown, to raise it up, smoothes the front upon his knee, and presents to your eyes an object at once whimsically fantastical, which recalls confusedly to your memory those fabulous head-dresses favoured by box-keepers, aunts of opera-dancers, or duennas of provincial theatres. Further on, at the sign of the *Goût du joür*, under the arcades of the Rotunda, elevated at the end of the wide opening which separates the Temple in two parts, were hanging, like *exotics*, numerous clothes, in colour, shape, and make still more extravagant than those of the bonnets just described. Here were seen frock-coats, flashily set-off by three rows of hussar-jacket buttons, and warmly ornamented with a little fur-collar of fox's skin. Great-coats, formerly of bottle-green, rendered by time *invisible*, edged with a black cord, and brightened by a lining of plaid, blue and yellow, which had a most laughable effect. Coats, formerly styled the "swallow-tails," of a reddish brown, with a handsome collar of plush, ornamented with buttons, once gilt, but now of a copper colour. There were also to be seen Polish cloaks, with collars of cat-skin, frogged, and faced with old black cotton-velvet; not far from these were dressing-gowns, cunningly made of watchmen's old great-coats, from which were taken the many capes, and lined with pieces of printed cotton; the better sort were of dead blue and dark green, patched up with sundry pieces of variegated colours, and fastened round the waist with an old woollen bell-rope serving for a girdle, making a finish to these elegant *déshabilles* so exultingly worn by Robert Macaire.

We shall briefly pass over a variety of "loud" costumes, more or less uncouth, in the midst of which might here and there be seen some authentic relics of royalty or greatness, dragged by the revolution of time from palaces and noble halls, to figure on the dingy shelves of the Rotunda.

These exhibitions of old shoes, old hats, and

ridiculous old dresses, were on the grotesque side of the bazaar—the quarter for beggars, ostentatiously decked out and disguised; but it must be allowed, or rather distinctly asserted, that this vast establishment was of immense use to the humble classes, or those of limited means. There they might purchase, at an amazing reduction in price, excellent things, almost new, the actual depreciation in value being almost imaginary. On one side of the Temple, set apart for bedding, there were heaps of coverlets, sheets, mattrasses, and pillows. Further on were carpets, curtains, and all sorts of kitchen utensils; besides clothes, shoes, and headdresses for all classes and ages. These objects, generally of perfect cleanliness, offered nothing repugnant to the sight.

One could scarcely believe, before visiting the bazaar, how little time and money were requisite to fill a cart with all that is necessary to the complete fitting-out of two or three families who wanted everything.

Rudolph was struck by the manner at once eager, obliging, and merry, with which the various dealers, standing outside their shops, solicited the custom of the passers-by; these manners, stamped with a sort of respectful familiarity, seemed to belong to another age. Scarcely had Miss Dimpleton and her companion appeared in the long passage occupied by those who sold bedding, than they were surrounded by the most seductive offers.

"Sir, come in and see my mattrasses; they are better than new! I will unsew a corner, that you may examine the stuffing: you will think it lambs'-wool, it is so white and soft!"

"My pretty little lady, I have sheets of fine holland, finer than at first, for their stiffness has been taken out of them; they are as soft as a glove, strong as steel."

"Come, my elegant new-married couple, buy of me a counterpane. See how soft, warm, and light they are; you would imagine them of eider-down—nearly new—have not been used twenty times; look, my little lady, decide for your husband—give me your custom—I will furnish very cheaply for you—you will be satisfied—you will come again to Mother Bouvard. You will find all you want in my shop; yesterday I made beautiful purchases—you shall see them all—come in, anyhow—it will not cost anything to look."

"By my faith, neighbour," said Rudolph to Miss Dimpleton, "this good, fat woman shall have the preference; she takes us for young married people. The supposition flatters me, and I decide for her shop."

"To the good, fat woman's, then," answered Miss Dimpleton; "her face pleases me too."

The grisette and her companion then entered Mother Bouvard's shop. By a magnanimity perhaps unexampled anywhere but at the Temple, the rivals of Mother Bouvard did not rebel at the preference accorded her; one of the neighbours, indeed, had the generosity to say, "So long as it is Mother Bouvard, and no other, who has this customer, it is very well; she has a family, and is the oldest inhabitant of the Temple, and an honour to it." It was, besides, impossible to have a face more prepossessing, open, and joyous than hers.

"Here, my pretty little lady," said she to Miss Dimpleton, who examined everything with the manner of one capable of judging, "this is the purchase of which I spoke: two beds, completely fitted up, and as good as new. If by chance you want a little old secretary, and not dear, there is one," and she pointed to it, "that I had in the same lot. Although I do not generally buy furniture, I could not refuse to take it, as the person of whom I had all this seemed so unhappy. Poor lady! it was the parting with that, above all, that appeared to rend her heart; an old piece of furniture very long with the family."

At these words, while the shopkeeper and Miss Dimpleton were debating the prices of different articles, Rudolph looked more attentively at the piece of furniture which Mother Bouvard had pointed out. It was one of those old secretaries of rosewood, in shape nearly triangular, shut in by a panel in front, which, thrown back, and supported by two long brass hinges, could be used as a writing-desk. In the middle of the panel, inlaid with different coloured wood, Rudolph noticed a cipher in ebony, an M. and R. interlaced, and surmounted by the coronet of a count. He imagined its last possessor to belong to an elevated class of society. His curiosity increased; he examined the secretary with renewed attention; he opened mechanically the drawers, one after the other, when, finding some difficulty in opening the last, and seeking the cause, he discovered and drew out carefully a sheet of paper, partly entangled between the drawer and the bottom of the secretary. While Miss Dimpleton was finishing her purchases with Mother Bouvard, Rudolph narrowly scrutinized the paper; from the many erasures, it was easily to be seen that it was an unfinished draught of a letter. Rudolph, with difficulty, read as follows:—

"Sir,—Be assured that misfortunes the most frightful could alone compel me to address you. It is not from ill-placed pride I feel these scruples, but the absolute want of any claim to the service I venture to ask of you. The sight of my daughter, reduced, like myself, to the most painful privation, urges me to the task. A few words will explain the cause of the misfortunes which overwhelm me. After the death of my husband, there remained to me a fortune of three hundred thousand francs, placed by my brother with M. Jacques Ferrand, notary. I received at Angers, where I had retired with my daughter, the interest of this sum in remittances from my brother. You remember, sir, the frightful event that put an end to his existence; ruined, as it appeared by

secret and unfortunate speculations, he destroyed himself, eight months since. Before this melancholy event, I received from him a few lines, written in despair, in which he said, when I read them he should have ceased to exist; he finished by informing me that he possessed no document relative to the sum placed in my name with M. Jacques Ferrand, as that individual never gave a receipt, but was honour and goodness itself, and it would only be necessary for me to call on him for the affair to be satisfactorily arranged. As soon as I could possibly turn my attention to anything but the fearful death of my brother, I came to Paris, where I knew no one but yourself, sir, and that indirectly, by business you had had with my husband. I told you that the sum placed with M. Jacques Ferrand comprised the whole of my fortune, and that my brother sent me, every six months, the interest derived from that sum. More than a year having passed since the last payment, I consequently called on the notary, to demand that of which I stood greatly in want. Scarcely had I made myself known, than, without respecting my grief, he accused my brother of having borrowed from him two thousand francs, which he had entirely lost by his death; adding, that not only was his suicide a crime towards God and man, but that it was still further an act of dishonesty, of which he was the victim. This odious speech made me indignant. The upright conduct of my brother was well known; he had, it is true, without the knowledge of myself or his friends, lost his fortune in hazardous speculations, but he died with his reputation unsullied, regretted by every one, and leaving no debts, save that to his notary. I replied to M. Ferrand, that I authorized him to take instantly from the sum he had in his charge, of mine, the two thousand francs my brother was indebted to him. At these words he looked at me in a stupefied manner, and asked me of what money I spoke? 'The three hundred thousand francs that my brother placed in your hands eighteen months since, sir; the interest of which you have remitted, through him,' said I, not comprehending his question. The notary shrugged his shoulders, smiled in pity, as though my assertion was not true, and answered me that, so far from having placed money with him, he had borrowed two thousand francs.

"It is impossible to explain to you my terror at this answer. 'But what, then, has become of this sum?' asked I. 'My daughter and myself have no other resource; if it be taken from us, there remains but the greatest misery. What will become of us?' 'I know nothing about it,' said the notary, coolly; 'it is most likely that your brother, instead of placing this sum with me, as he told you, made use of it in those unfortunate speculations to which he gave himself up, without the knowledge of any one.' 'It is false, sir!' I exclaimed, 'my brother was honour's self. Far from despoiling myself and child, he sacrificed himself to us. He would never marry, that he might leave all he possessed to my child.' 'Dare you assume, then, madame, that I am capable of denying a trust reposed in me?' asked the notary, with an indignation so apparently honourable and sincere, that I replied: 'No, sir; without doubt, your reputation for probity is well known; but, notwithstanding, I cannot accuse my brother of so cruel an abuse of confidence.' 'Upon what deeds do you found this demand on me?' asked M. Ferrand. 'None, sir: eighteen months since, my brother, who took upon himself the management of my affairs, wrote to me, saying: 'I have an excellent opportunity of realizing six per cent.—send me your warrant of attorney: I will deposit three hundred thousand francs, which I have concluded about, with M. Ferrand, the notary.' I sent the power of attorney; and, a few days after, he informed me that he had effected the deposit with you; and, at the end of six months, he sent me the interest of that sum.' At least you have some letters from him on the subject, madame?' 'No, sir; as they related only to business, I did not preserve them.' 'I, unhappily, madame, know nothing of all this,' replied the notary; 'if my character was not above all suspicion, all attack, I should say to you, the law is open to you, proceed against me; the judges will have to choose between an honourable man, who, for thirty years, has enjoyed the esteem of persons of consideration, and the posthumous declaration of a man, who, after ruining himself in the most hazardous speculations, found refuge only in suicide. In short, I say to you now, attack me, madame, if you dare, and the memory of your brother will be dishonoured! But I should think that you will have the good sense to be resigned to a misfortune, doubtless very great, but to which I am a stranger.' 'But, sir, I am a mother; if my fortune is lost to me, my daughter and myself have only the resource of some little furniture: that sold, there remains but misery, sir, appalling misery!' 'You have, unfortunately, been cheated—I can do nothing,' replied the notary. 'Again, I tell you, madame, your brother deceived you. If you hesitate between my word and his, proceed against me—the law is open to you—I abide by its decision.' I left the office of the notary in the deepest despair. What remained for me to do in this extremity? Without any document to prove the validity of my claim, convinced of the strict honesty of my brother, confounded by the assurance of M. Ferrand, having no one from whom I could ask advice (you were then travelling), knowing that money was necessary to have the opinion of counsel, and wishing carefully to preserve the little which was left to me, I dared not undertake the commencement of a law-suit. It was then——"

This copy of a letter ended here, for strokes not decipherable, covered some lines which followed; at last, at the bottom, in a corner of the page, Rudolph read the following memorandum:—

"*Write to the Duchess de Lucenay, for M. de Saint-Remy.*"

Rudolph remained thoughtful after the perusal of this fragment of a letter, in which he had found two names whose connection struck him. Although the additional infamy with which M. Ferrand appeared to be accused was not proved, this man had shown himself so pitiless towards the unfortunate Morel, so infamous to Louise, his daughter, that a denial of the deposit, protected as he was from certain discovery, did not appear strange, coming from such a wretch. This mother, who claimed a fortune which had so strangely disappeared, no doubt accustomed to the comforts of life, was ruined by a blow so sudden: knowing no one at Paris, as the letter said, what could now be the existence of these two females, deprived of everything, alone in the heart of this immense city?

The prince had, as we know, promised to Lady d'Harville *some intrigues*, which he hazarded for the purpose of occupying her mind, and a part to perform in some future work of charity, feeling certain of finding, before his again meeting the lady, some grief to assuage: he trusted that perhaps chance might throw in his path some worthy, unfortunate person, who could, agreeably to his project, interest the heart and imagination of Lady d'Harville. The wording of th e letter that he held in his hands, a copy of which, without doubt, had never been sent to the person from whom assistance was implored, showed a character proud and resigned, to whom the offer of charity would be no doubt repugnant. In that case, what precautions and delicate deceptions would be necessary to hide the source of a generous succour, or to make it acceptable! And then, what address to gain introduction to this lady, so that you might judge if she really merited the interest it seemed she ought to inspire! Rudolph foresaw a crowd of emotions, new, curious, and touching, which ought singularly to amuse Lady d'Harville, as he had promised her.

"Well, *husband*, said Miss Dimpleton, gaily, "what is that scrap of paper you are reading?"

"My little *wife*," answered Rudolph, "you are very curious. I will tell you presently. Have you concluded your purchases?"

"Certainly, and your poor friends will be established like kings. There remains only to pay. Mother Bouvard is very accommodating, it must be allowed."

"My little *wife*, an idea has just struck me; while I am paying, will you go and choose clothing for Mrs. Morel and her children; I confess my ignorance on the subject of such purchases. You can tell them to bring the things here, as there need be but one journey, and the poor people will have all at the same time."

"You are always right, *husband*. Wait for me, I shall not be long; I know two shopkeepers with whom I always deal, and I shall find there all that I want." Miss Dimpleton went out, saying, "Mother Bouvard, I trust my *husband* to you; do not make love to him." And, laughing, she hastily disappeared.

"Indeed, sir," said Mother Bouvard to Rudolph, after the departure of Miss Dimpleton, "you must allow that you possess a famous little manager. She understands well how to buy. So pretty! Red and white, with beautiful large black eyes, and hair to match!"

"Is she not charming? Am I not a happy husband, Mother Bouvard?"

"As happy a husband as she is a wife, I am quite sure."

"You are not mistaken there; but tell me, how much do I owe you?"

"Your little lady would not go beyond three hundred and thirty francs for all. As there is a heaven above, I only clear fifteen francs, for I did not buy them so cheaply as I might; I had not the heart to bate them down, the people who sold them appeared so very unhappy!"

"Indeed! were they not the same persons of whom you bought the little secretary?"

"Yes, sir; and it breaks my heart only to think of it. There came here the day before yesterday, a lady, still young and beautiful, but so pale and thin, that it gave you pain to see her. Although she was neat and clean, her old threadbare, black worsted shawl, her black stuff gown, also much worn and frayed, her straw bonnet in the month of January, for she was in mourning, proclaimed what is termed a *shabby genteel* appearance, but I am sure she was of real quality. At length she inquired, with a blush, if I would purchase two beds complete, and an old secretary. I replied, that as I sold I must buy, and that, if they suited me, I would have them. She then begged me to go with her, not far from here, on the other side of the street, to a house on the quay of the Canal Saint Martin. I left my shop in charge of my niece, and followed the lady. We came to a shabby-looking house, quite at the bottom of a court; we went up to the fourth story, the lady knocked, and a young girl of fourteen opened the door; she was also in mourning, and equally pale and thin, but in spite of this, beautiful as the day—so beautiful, that I was enraptured!"

"Well, and this young girl?"

"Was the daughter of the lady in mourning. Although so cold, she had on nothing more than a black cotton dress with white spots, and a little black shawl quite worn out."

"And their lodging was wretched?"

"Imagine, sir, two little rooms, very clean, but almost empty, and so cold that I was nearly frozen; a fireplace where you could

not perceive the least appearance of ashes; there had not been a fire for a long time. The whole of the furniture consisted of two beds, two chairs, a chest of drawers, an old trunk, and the little secretary. Upon the trunk was a bundle in a handkerchief. This bundle was all that remained to the mother and daughter, when once their furniture was sold. The landlord selected the two bedsteads, the chairs, trunk, and table, for what they were indebted to him, as the porter said who came up with us. When the lady begged me to put a fair value on the mattrass, sheets, curtains, and blankets, on the faith of an honest woman, sir, although I live by buying cheap and selling dear, when I saw the poor young lady, her eyes filled with tears, and her mother, in spite of her calmness, appearing to weep inwardly, I estimated them within fifteen francs of their value to sell again, I assure you; I even consented, to oblige them, to take the little secretary, although it is not in my line of business."

"I will buy it of you, Mother Bouvard."

"Will you though? So much the better, sir; it would have remained on my hands a long time, and I only took it to serve the lady. I then told her what I would give for the things, and I expected she would ask me more than I had offered; but no, she said not a word about it. This still more satisfied me that she was no common person; *genteel poverty*, sir, be assured. I said, 'So much,' she answered, 'Thank you! now let us return to your shop, and you can then pay me, as I shall not come back again to this house.' Then, speaking to her daughter, who was sitting on the trunk, crying, she said, 'Claire, take the bundle.' I remember the name well. The young lady rose up, but in passing by the side of the little secretary, she threw herself on her knees before it, and began to sob. 'Courage, my child, they are looking at us,' said her mother, in a low tone, but yet I heard her. You can understand, sir, they are poor but proud people. When the lady gave me the key of the little secretary, I noticed a tear in her eyes, her heart seemed breaking at parting with the old piece of furniture; but she still tried to preserve her calmness and dignity before strangers. She then gave the porter to understand that I was to take away all the landlord did not keep, and afterwards we returned here. The young lady gave her arm to her mother, and carried in her hand the little bundle which contained their all. I paid them three hundred and fifteen francs, and have not since seen them."

"But their name?"

"I do not know: the lady sold me the things in the presence of the porter; I had not the necessity to ask her name, as what she sold belonged to herself."

"But their new abode?"

"That, also, I do not know."

"Perhaps they can inform me at their old lodging?"

"No, sir; for when I returned to fetch away the things, the porter said, speaking of the mother and daughter: 'They are very quiet people, but very unhappy; some misfortunes have happened to them. They always appeared calm; but I am sure they were in a state of despair.' 'And where are they going to lodge at this late hour?' I asked him. 'In truth, I know nothing,' answered he; 'it is, however, quite certain they will not return here.'"

The hopes that Rudolph had entertained for a moment vanished. How could he discover these two unhappy females, having only as a clue the name of the young girl, Claire, and the fragment of a letter, of which we have spoken, at the bottom of which were the words: "*Write to Madame de Lucenay, for M. de Saint-Remy.*"

The only chance, and that was a very faint one, of tracing these unfortunates, rested in Madame de Lucenay, who, fortunately, was on intimate terms with Lady d'Harville.

"Here, madame, pay yourself," said Rudolph to the shopkeeper, giving her a note for five hundred francs.

"I will give you the difference, sir."

"Where can I engage a cart to carry the things?"

"If it be not very far, a large truck will be sufficient; Father Jerome has one, quite close by; I always employ him. What is your address?"

"No. 17, Rue du Temple."

"Rue du Temple, No. 17. Yes, yes, I know the house."

"You have been there?"

"Many times. First, I bought some clothes of a pawnbroker who lived there. It is true, she did not carry on a large business, but that was no affair of mine; she sold, I bought, and we were quits. Another time, not six months ago, I went again for the furniture of a young man who lived on the fourth story, and who was going to remove."

"M. François Germain, perhaps;" said Rudolph.

"The same. Do you know him?"

"Very well. Unhappily, he has not left in the Rue du Temple his present address, and I do not know where to find him."

"If that be all, I can remove the difficulty."

"You know where he lives?"

"Not exactly; but I know where you will be sure to meet with him."

"Where is that?"

"At a notary's, where he is employed."

"At a notary's?"

"Yes; who lives in the Rue du Sentier."

"M. Jacques Ferrand!" exclaimed Rudolph.

"The same; a worthy man; he has a crucifix and a bit of the true cross in his office, which reminds one of a sacristy."

"But how do you know that M. Germain is with the notary?"

"Why, in this way. The young man came to me, and proposed that I should buy all

his furniture; although not in my way of business, I agreed, and afterwards retailed them here; for, as it suited the young man, I did not like to refuse. Well, then I bought him clean out, and gave him a good price; he was, doubtless, satisfied with me, for at the end of a fortnight he came to buy a bedstead and bedding. He brought with him a truck and a porter; they packed up all; but, just as he was about to pay, he found he had forgotten his purse. He appeared such an honest young man, that I said to him: 'Take the things with you, all the same; I will call for the money.' 'Very well,' he said; 'but I am seldom at home; call, therefore, to-morrow, in the Rue du Sentier, at M. Jacques Ferrand's, the notary, where I am employed, and I will then pay you.' I went the next day, and he paid me. Only, what I thought so odd was, his selling me all his goods, and buying others in a fortnight after."

Rudolph thought he could account for the cause of this singularity. Germain, wishing that the wretches who pursued him should lose all traces of him, had sold his goods, thinking that if he removed them it might give a clue to his new abode, and had preferred, to avoid this evil, purchasing others, and taking them himself to his lodgings. Rudolph started with joy when he thought of the happiness for Mrs. George, who was at last about to see this son, so long and vainly sought.

Miss Dimpleton now returned with joyful eyes and smiling lips.

"Well, did I not tell you?" she exclaimed. "I was not wrong: we have spent, in all, six hundred and forty francs, and the Morels will be housed like princes. See! the shopkeepers are coming: are they not loaded? Nothing is wanted for the use of the family—even to a gridiron, two beautiful saucepans newly tinned, and a coffee-pot. I said to myself, since everything is to be had, it shall be so; and, besides all that, I have spent three hours. But make haste and pay, neighbour, and let us go. It is almost noon, and my needle must go at a pretty rate to overtake this morning!"

Rudolph paid, and left the Temple with Miss Dimpleton.

As the grisette and her companion entered the passage of the house, they were almost thrown down by Mrs. Pipelet, who was running out, troubled, frightened, aghast.

"Gracious heaven!" said Miss Dimpleton, "what is the matter with you, Mrs. Pipelet? Where are you running to in that manner?"

"Is that you, Miss Dimpleton?" exclaimed Anastasie. "Providence has sent you. Help me! save the life of Alfred!"

"What do you say?"

"That poor old darling has fainted! Have pity upon us! run and fetch two sous-worth of absinthe—very strong; that is the remedy when he is indisposed in the pylorus. Be kind; do not refuse me, and I can return to Alfred. I am quite confused!"

Miss Dimpleton left Rudolph's arm, and ran off to the dram-shop.

"But what has happened, Mrs. Pipelet?" asked Rudolph, following the portress, who returned to the lodge.

"How should I know, my worthy sir? I left home to go to the mayor's, the church, and the cook-shop, to prevent Alfred from tiring himself. I returned; what did I see?—the dear old man with his legs and arms all in the air! Look, M. Rudolph!" said Anastasie, opening the door of the room, "is not that a sight to break one's heart?"

Lamentable spectacle! With his enormous hat still on his head, even further on than usual, for the questionable *castor*, pushed down, no doubt, by violence, if we may judge by a transverse gap, covered Pipelet's eyes, who was on his back on the floor, at the foot of his bed.

The fainting was over, and Alfred was beginning to make some slight movements with his hands, as though he wished to repulse some one or some thing; and then he tried to remove his troublesome visor.

"He kicks! that is a good sign; he recovers!" cried the portress—and, stooping down, she bawled in his ears: "What is the matter with my Alfred? It is his 'Stasie who is here. How are you now? They are going to bring you some absinthe; that will put you to rights." Then, assuming a caressing tone of voice, she added: "Have they abused you, killed you, my dear old darling—eh?"

Alfred sighed deeply, and with a groan uttered a fatal word: "*Cabrion!*" His trembling hands seemed as though desirous of repulsing a frightful vision.

"Cabrion! that devil of a painter again!" exclaimed Mrs. Pipelet. "Alfred all night dreamed so much about him, that he kicked me dreadfully. That monster is his nightmare! Not only has he poisoned his days, but his nights also; he persecutes him even in his sleep—yes, sir, as though Alfred was a malefactor; and this Cabrion, whom may the devil confound! is his remorseless enemy."

Rudolph smiled, as he foresaw some new trick on the part of Miss Dimpleton's former neighbour.

"Alfred, answer me; do not remain dumb—you alarm me," said Mrs. Pipelet; "let us get you up. Why will you think on that beggarly fellow? You know that, when you think of him, it has the same effect on you as when you eat cabbage—it fills up your gizzard, and stifles you!"

"Cabrion!" repeated Pipelet, lifting with difficulty his hat from his eyes, which he rolled about with a frightened air.

Miss Dimpleton entered, carrying a small bottle of absinthe.

"Thank you, mademoiselle; you are very kind," said the old woman. Then she added: "Here, darling, pop it down; it will bring you to yourself."

And Anastasie, presenting the phial quickly

to Pipelet's lips, insisted on his swallowing the contents. Alfred in vain struggled courageously: his wife, profiting by the weakness of her victim, held his head with a firm grasp in one hand, and with the other introduced the neck of the phial between his teeth, and forced him to drink the absinthe; after which she cried triumphantly: "Well done! you are again on your *pins*, my cherished one!"

Alfred (after having wiped his mouth with the back of his hand) opened his eyes, stood up, and asked, in a trembling voice: "Have you seen him?"

"Who?"

"Is he gone?"

"Alfred, whom do you mean?"

"Cabrion!"

"Has he dared ——" cried the portress.

Pipelet, as dumb as the statue of the Commander, in *Don Giovanni*, bowed his head twice in the affirmative.

"M. Cabrion, has he been here?" asked Miss Dimpleton, restraining with difficulty an inclination to laugh.

"That monster! has he been let loose upon Alfred?" cried Mrs. Pipelet. "Oh, if I had been here with my broom, he should have eaten it up, to the very handle! But speak, Alfred; relate to us this horrible affair."

Pipelet made a sign with his hand that he was about to speak, and they listened to the man of the immense hat in religious silence. He expressed himself in these terms, with a voice deeply agitated: "My wife had just left me to complete the orders given by you, sir (bowing to Rudolph), to call at the mayor's, the church, and the cook-shop ——"

"The dear old man had the nightmare all night, and I wished him to rest," said Anastasie.

"This nightmare was sent me as a warning from above," said the porter, solemnly. "I had dreamed of Cabrion—I was to suffer by Cabrion. Here was I sitting quietly before the table, thinking of an alteration that I wished to make in this boot confided to me, when I heard a noise, a rustling at the window of my lodge—was it a presentiment—a warning from above? My heart beat; I raised my head, and through the window I saw—saw ——"

"Cabrion!" cried Anastasie, clasping her hands.

"Cabrion!" replied Pipelet, in a hollow tone. "His hideous face was there, close to the window, looking at me with his cat's eyes—what do I say?—tiger's eyes!—just as in my dream. I tried to speak, but my tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth; I would have risen—I was glued to my seat; the boot fell from my hands, and, as in every critical and important event of my life, I remained completely motionless. Then the key turned in the lock; the door opened, and Cabrion entered!"

"He entered? what effrontery!" said Mrs. Pipelet, as much astonished as her husband at such audacity.

"Cabrion advanced slowly, his looks fixed on me, as a serpent glares on the bird, like a phantom—on, on, chilling, lowering!"

"I'm goose-flesh all over!" groaned Anastasie.

"He came quite close to me; I could no longer endure his revolting aspect; it was too much, I could hold out no longer. I shut my eyes, and I then felt that he dared to put his hands on my hat, took it slowly off my head, and left it naked! I was seized with giddiness—my breathing was suspended—a ringing came in my ears—I was more than ever glued to my seat—I shut my eyes more firmly. Then Cabrion stooped, took my bald head between his hands, cold as death, and upon my forehead, bathed in sweat, imprinted a lascivious kiss!"

Anastasie lifted her arms towards heaven.

"My most inveterate enemy kissed my forehead! A monstrosity so unparalleled overcame and paralyzed me. Cabrion profited by my stupor to replace my hat on my head: then, with a blow on the crown, bonneted me as you saw. This last outrage quite overpowered me—the measure was full; everything about me turned round, and I fainted at the moment when I saw him, from under the rim of my hat, leave the room as quietly and slowly as he had entered."

Then, as though this recital had exhausted his strength, Pipelet fell back on his chair, raising his hands to heaven in the attitude of mute imprecation. Miss Dimpleton left the room suddenly; her desire to laugh almost stifled her, and she could no longer restrain herself. Rudolph himself had with difficulty preserved his gravity.

Suddenly, a confused murmur, such as announces the assembling of a multitude, was heard in the street; a tumult arose at the end of the passage, and then musket-butts sounded on the door-step.

"Good heaven, M. Rudolph!" cried Miss Dimpleton, running back, pale and trembling; "here are a commissary of police and the guard!"

"Divine justice watches over me!" said Pipelet, in a burst of religious gratitude; "they come to arrest Cabron! Unhappily, it is too late!"

A commissary of police, known by a scarf worn under his black coat, entered the lodge. His countenance was grave, dignified and severe.

"M. le Commissaire, you are too late; the malefactor has fled!" said Pipelet, sadly; "but I can give you his description. Villanous smile, impudent manners——"

"Of whom do you speak?" asked the officer.

"Of Cabrion, M. le Commissaire, and if you make all haste, there may be yet time to get hold of him," answered Pipelet.

"I do not know who this Cabrion is," said

the officer, impatiently: "Does Jérome Morel, working-lapidary, live in this house?"

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Pipelet, standing at the salute.

"Conduct me to his apartment."

"Morel, the lapidary!" resumed the portress, quite surprised; "he is as gentle as a lamb, and incapable of——"

"Does Jérome Morel live here or not?"

"He does live here, sir, with his family, in the attic."

"Show me, then, to this garret."

Then, addressing a man who accompanied him, the magistrate said: "Let the two municipal guards wait below, and not leave the alley. Send Justin for a coach." The man left to execute these orders.

"Now," said the magistrate, addressing Pipelet, "conduct me to Morel."

"If it be all the same to you, sir, I will go instead of Alfred, who is indisposed from the persecution of Cabrion; who, just as cabbage does, troubles his gizzard."

"You, or your husband, it matters little which—go on." Preceded by Mrs. Pipelet, he began to ascend the stairs; but he soon stopped, perceiving that he was followed by Rudolph and Miss Dimpleton.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" demanded he.

"They are the two fourth-floors," said Mrs. Pipelet.

"Pardon me, sir, I did not know that you belonged to the house," said he, to Rudolph; who, auguring well from the politeness of the magistrate, said, "You will find a family in great distress, sir. I do not know what new misfortune menaces the unhappy artizan, but he has been cruelly tried last night; one of his children, worn out by illness, is dead beneath his eyes—dead from cold and misery."

"Is it possible?"

"It is the truth," said Mrs. Pipelet. "If it had not been for the gentleman who now speaks to you, and who is a king of lodgers, for he has saved, by his goodness, poor Morel from prison, the whole family of the lapidary must have died of hunger."

The commissary looked at Rudolph with as much interest as surprise.

"Nothing is more simple, sir," said the latter. "A person who is very charitable, knowing that Morel, to whose worth I pledge my honour, was in a position as deplorable as it was unmerited, instructed me to pay a bill of exchange, for which the bailiffs were about to drag to prison this poor man, the sole support of a large family."

Struck in his turn by the noble appearance of Rudolph, and the dignity of his manner, the magistrate replied, "I do not doubt the probity of Morel: I only regret being compelled to fulfil a painful duty before you, sir, who have shown so lively an interest in this family."

"What can you mean, sir?"

"After the services you have rendered the Morels, and from your language, I know that you are a worthy man. Having, besides, no reason to conceal the object of the mandate I am about to execute, I will acknowledge that I am about to arrest Louise Morel, the lapidary's daughter."

The rouleau of gold that she had offered to the bailiffs came to the mind of Rudolph.

"Of what is she accused?"

"She is accused of infanticide."

"She, she! Oh, her poor father!"

"From what you have told me, sir, I conceive that, under the circumstances in which the artisan is placed, this new blow will be terrible for him. Unfortunately, I must obey my orders."

"But it is only a simple accusation!" cried Rudolph. "The proofs are wanting, without doubt?"

"I cannot explain myself farther on this subject. The authorities have been informed of this crime, or rather, the presumption, by the declarations of a man in every way respectable—the master of Louise Morel."

"Jacques Ferrand, the notary!" said Rudolph, indignantly.

"Yes, sir. But why this vivacity?"

"M. Jacques Ferrand is a scoundrel, sir!"

"I see with pain that you do not know of whom you speak. M. Jacques Ferrand is the most honourable man in the world; of most exemplary piety, and known probity."

"I repeat to you, sir, that the notary is a scoundrel. He wished to imprison Morel, because his daughter repulsed his infamous propositions. If Louise is only accused on the testimony of such a man—acknowledge, sir, that it merits but little belief."

"It does not belong to me, sir, and it does not become me, to discuss the value of the testimony of M. Ferrand," said the officer, coldly. "Justice has taken cognizance of the affair; the tribunals will decide. As to me, I have orders to arrest Louise Morel, and I shall do it."

"You are right, sir. I regret that a movement of indignation, perhaps legitimate, has made me forget that this is neither the time nor place for such a discussion. One word alone: the body of the child he has lost is in the garret. I have offered my room to this family, to spare them the sad sight of the corpse; hence it is, probably, in my chamber you will find the artisan and his daughter. I conjure you, sir, in the name of humanity, do not arrest Louise suddenly in the midst of these misfortunes. Morel has gone through so many shocks this night that his reason will give way; his wife is also dangerously sick—such a blow will kill her. If you will permit me, I'll ask you a favour. This is what I propose. The young girl who follows us with the door-keeper, occupies a room adjoining mine; I do not doubt but that she will place it at your disposal. You can at first send for Louise; then, if it must be, for Morel, that

his daughter may bid him farewell. You will at least spare a poor, sick, and infirm mother a heart-rending scene."

"If this can be arranged so, sir, willingly."

This conversation had taken place in an under-tone, while Rigolette and Mrs. Pipelet held themselves discreetly at some distance off.

Rudolph descended, and said to the former, "My poor neighbour, I must ask another favour: you must let me have your room at my disposal for an hour."

"As long as you please, M. Rudolph. You have my key. But, what is the matter?"

"I will tell you directly. This is not all: you must be kind enough to return to the Temple, to tell them to delay sending home our purchases for an hour."

"Willingly, M. Rudolph; but is there a new misfortune happened to the Morels?"

"Alas! yes; you will know it only too soon."

"Come, neighbour, I fly to the Temple. I, thanks to you, thought them out of trouble," said the grisette, descending rapidly the stairs.

Rudolph wished to spare Rigolette the sad spectacle of the arrest of Louise. "Officer," said Mrs. Pipelet, "since my prince of lodgers accompanies you, I can go and find Alfred. He alarms me: he has hardly recovered from his attack of—Cabrion."

"Go—go!" said the magistrate; who remained alone with Rudolph. Both arrived on the landing-place of the fourth, opposite the door of the room where the artisan and his family were temporarily placed.

Suddenly this door was opened. Louise, pale and weeping, came out quickly. "Adieu, adieu! father," cried she; "I will return—I must go now."

"Louise, my child, listen to me, then," answered Morel, following his daughter, and trying to detain her.

At the sight of Rudolph and the magistrate they remained immovable.

"Ah, sir! you, our saviour," said the artisan, recognising Rudolph; "aid me, to prevent Louise from going. I do not know what is the matter with her, she makes me afraid; she wishes to go away. Is it not so, sir, that she must not return any more to her master? Did you not say, 'Louise shall quit you no more—this shall be your recompense.' Oh! at this delightful promise, I avow it, for a moment I have forgotten the death of my poor little Adele; but to be separated from you, Louise, never, never!"

Rudolph felt himself overcome; he had not strength to utter a word.

The officer said severely to Louise, "Are you Louise Morel?"

"Yes, sir!" answered the young girl, amazed.

Rudolph had opened the chamber of Rigolette.

"You are Jérome Morel, her father?" added the magistrate, addressing the artisan.

"Yes—sir! but"—

"Enter there with your daughter. And the magistrate pointed to the chamber of Rigolette, where Rudolph already was. Reassured by his presence, the artisan and Louise, astonished and troubled, obeyed; the officer shut the door, and said to Morel, with emotion, "I know your honesty and misfortunes; it is, then, with regret I inform you that, in the name of the law, I come to arrest your daughter."

"All is discovered—I am lost!" cried Louise, throwing herself in the arms of her father.

"What do you say? what do you say?" said Morel, stupified. "Are you mad? why lost? arrest you! why arrest you? who will arrest you?"

"I—in the name of the law!" and the officer showed his scarf.

"Oh, unfortunate! unfortunate that I am!" cried Louise, falling on her knees.

"How, in the name of the law?" said the artisan, whose mind began to wander; "why arrest my daughter in the name of the law? I answer for Louise, I—she is my daughter, my worthy daughter—is it not true, Louise? How arrest you, when our guardian angel restores you to us, to console us for the death of my little Adèle? Come now! it cannot be! And besides, sir, speaking with respect, only criminals are arrested, do you understand—and Louise, my daughter, is not a criminal. Very sure, do you see, my child, this gentleman is mistaken. My name is Morel; there are more Morels than me. You are Louise—but there are more of the same name. That's it, you see, sir; there is a mistake!"

"Unfortunately, there is no mistake! Louise Morel, say farewell to your father."

"You carry away my daughter, will you!" cried the workman, furious from grief, and advancing towards the magistrate with a threatening air.

Rudolph seized him by the arm, and said, "Calm yourself, and hope; your daughter shall be returned to you—her innocence shall be proved; she is doubtless not culpable."

"Of what? she can be culpable of nothing. I would place my hand in the fire that"—then recollecting the gold that Louise had brought to pay the note, Morel cried, "But that money, that money, Louise!" and he cast on his daughter a terrible look.

Louise understood it. "I steal!" cried she, and the cheeks coloured with generous indignation. Her tone of voice, her gesture, satisfied her father.

"I knew it!" he cried. "Do you see, sir—she denies it—and never in her life has she lied, I swear to you. Ask every one who knows her, and they will say the same. She lie? she is too proud for that. Besides, the bill was paid by our benefactor. She don't want gold; she was going to return it to the person who lent it, wasn't you, Louise?"

"Your daughter is not accused of theft," said the magistrate.

"But of what is she accused, then? I her father, swear that, whatever she is accused of, she is innocent; and all my life, I have never lied."

"What good will it do to know what she is accused of?" said Rudolph to him; "her innocence shall be proven—the person who interests herself so much in you will protect your daughter. Come, come. This time, again, Providence will not fail you. Embrace your daughter—you will soon see her again."

"M. le Commissaire," cried Morel, without listening to Rudolph, "a daughter is not taken away from a father without at least telling him of what she is accused! I wish to know all. Louise, will you speak?"

"Your daughter is accused—of infanticide," said the magistrate.

"I—I—do not comprehend—I—you"—

"Your daughter is accused of having killed her child," said the officer, much overcome at this scene.

"But it is not yet proved that she has committed this crime."

"Oh, no, it is not so, sir, it is not so," cried Louise, with force, and raising herself up: "I swear to you it was dead. It breathed no more; it was frozen; I lost all consciousness; that is my crime. But kill my child, oh, never!"

"Your child, wretch!" cried Morel, raising his hands to Louise, as if he wished to annihilate her with this gesture and terrible imprecation.

"Pardon, father, pardon!" cried she.

After a moment of frightful silence, Morel went on with a calmness still more frightful.

"Sir, take away this creature: she is not my child."

He wished to go out; Louise threw herself at his knees, which she embraced with both arms, and, with face upward, frantic, and supplicating, she cried, "Father, listen to me, only listen to me."

"Officer, take her away; I abandon her to you," said the artisan, making every effort to disengage himself from the embraces of Louise.

"Listen to her," said Rudolph, stopping him; "do not be now without pity."

"She, she!" repeated Morel, burying his face in his hands, "she dishonoured! oh! infamous, infamous!"

"Is she dishonoured to save you?" whispered Rudolph.

These words made a startling impression on Morel; he looked at his weeping child, still kneeling at his feet, then interrogating her with a look impossible to describe, he cried in a hollow voice, his teeth grinding with rage, "The notary!"

An answer came to the lips of Louise. She was about to speak, but, on reflection, she stopped, bent her head, and remained silent.

"But no—he wished to imprison me this morning," continued Morel; "it is not he? oh! so much the better! so much the better. She has no excuse for her fault; I can curse her without remorse."

"No, no! do not curse me, my father; to you I will tell all; to you alone; and you will see—you will see if I do not deserve your pardon."

"Listen to her for the sake of pity," said Rudolph.

"What can she tell me? her infamy? it will soon be public; I will wait."

"Sir!" cried Louise to the magistrate, "in mercy let me say a few words to my father before leaving him, perhaps for ever. And before you also, our saviour, I will speak—but only before you and my father."

"I consent," said the magistrate.

"Will you, then, be insensible? will you refuse this last consolation to your child?" asked Rudolph. "If you think you owe me some return for the favours I have directed towards you, grant the prayer of your daughter."

After a moment of mournful silence, Morel answered, "Let us go."

"But where shall we go?" asked Rudolph; "your family is in the next room."

"Where shall we go?" cried the artisan, with bitter irony, "where shall we go? up there—up there, in the garret, alongside of the body of my child. The place is well chosen for this confession—is it not? Come—we will see if Louise will dare to lie in the sight of the corpse of her sister. Come!" Morel went out precipitately, with a wild stare, without looking at Louise.

"Sir," whispered the officer to Rudolph, "do not prolong this interview. You said truly, his reason will not sustain it; just now his look was that of a madman."

"Alas! sir, I fear, like you, a terrible and new misfortune: I will shorten as much as possible the touching adieus." And Rudolph rejoined the artisan and his daughter.

CHAPTER III.

CONFESSION.

DARK and gloomy spectacle.

In the garret, reposed, on the couch of the idiot, the corpse of the little child. An old piece of sheet covered it. Rudolph, standing with his back to the wall, was painfully affected. Morel, seated on his work-bench, his head down, hands hanging, his looks, fixed, wild, were constantly bent on the bed where reposed the remains of the little Adele.

At this sight, the anger, the indignation of the artisan became weaker, and changed into a sadness of inexpressible bitterness; his energy abandoned him; he sunk under this new blow. Louise, of a mortal paleness, felt her strength fail her. The revelation

that she was about to make frightened her. Yet she took tremblingly the hand of her father—that poor, thin hand, deformed by excess of labour.

He did not withdraw it. Then his daughter, bursting into tears, covered it with kisses, and soon felt it press lightly against her lips. The anger of Morel had ceased; his tears, for a long time retained, flowed at last. "My father, if you knew—if you knew how much I am to be pitied."

"Oh! stop; you see, this will be the grief of all my life, Louise—of all my life," answered the artisan, weeping. "You in prison—in the dock—you, so proud—when you had the right to be so. No," continued he, in a new access of desperate grief, "No, I should prefer to seeing you under the winding-sheet, alongside your poor little sister."

"And I, also, wish it were so," answered Louise.

"Hush, unfortunate child, you give me pain. I was wrong to say that; I went too far. Come, speak, but tell the truth. However frightful it may be, tell me all. If I hear it from you it will appear less cruel to me. Speak; alas! our moments are counted; you are waited for. Oh! the sad, sad parting."

"My father, I will tell you all," said Louise, resolutely; "but promise me, and you, our benefactor, promise also, not to repeat this to any one. If he knew that I had spoken, do you see—oh! you would be lost—lost like me; for you do not know the power and ferocity of this man."

"Of what man?"

"My master."

"The notary?"

"Yes," said Louise, in a low tone, and looking around her, as if she were afraid of being overheard.

"Compose yourself," answered Rudolph. "This man is cruel and powerful, but no matter; we will face him. Besides, if I reveal what you are about to tell us, it will be only in your interest or in that of your father."

"And Louise, if I speak, it will be to try to save you. But what has this wicked man done?"

"This is not all," said Louise, after a moment's reflection; "this sad tale concerns some one who has rendered me a great service—who has been for my father and family full of kindness—this person was employed at M. Ferrand's when I went; I have sworn not to mention the name."

"If you mean François Germain, be easy; his secret will be kept by your father and myself," said Rudolph.

Louise looked at Rudolph with surprise.

"You know him?" said she.

"The good and excellent young man who lived here for three months, and was employed at the notary's when you went there?" said Morel. "The first time you saw him here you appeared not to know him."

"That was agreed upon between us. He had grave reasons to conceal that he worked for M. Ferrand. It was I who told him of the chamber on the fourth story, knowing he would be a good neighbour for you."

"But," said Rudolph, "who placed your daughter with the notary?"

"When my wife was taken sick, I had said to Madame Burette, the pawnbroker, who lives in this house, that Louise wished to go to service to aid us. Madame Burette knew the housekeeper of the notary; she gave me a letter to her, in which she strongly recommended Louise. Cursed—cursed be that letter; it has caused all our misfortunes. So, sir, this is the way my daughter went there."

"Although I am informed of some of the facts which have caused the hatred of M. Ferrand towards your father," said Rudolph to Louise, "I beg you will relate to me in a few words what passed between you and the notary since you entered his service. This may serve to defend you."

"During the first months of my stay at M. Ferrand's I had no reason to complain of him. I had much work to do; the housekeeper was often very rough towards me; the house was gloomy; but I endured all with patience; servitude is servitude, otherwise I should have had other disagreements. M. Ferrand had a stern look. He went to mass; he often received priests. I did not mistrust him. At first he hardly looked at me. He spoke very cross to me; above all, in the presence of strangers.

"Except the porter who lodged on the street, in the building where the office is, I was the only domestic with Mrs. Seraphin, the housekeeper. The building we occupied was an old isolated ruin, between the court and garden. My chamber was quite up to the top. Very often I was afraid to remain alone all the evening, either in the kitchen, which was underground, or in my chamber. In the night, I sometimes thought I heard extraordinary noises in the room under mine, which no one occupied, and where M. Germain alone often came to work during the day. Two of the windows of this story were walled up, and one of the doors, very thick, was strengthened with bars of iron. The housekeeper told me afterward that M. Ferrand kept his strong box there,

"One night I had sat up very late to finish some mending, which was very urgent; I was about to go to bed, when I heard some one walking very softly in the corridor at the end of which was my chamber: they stopped at my door; at first I thought it was the housekeeper, but as she did not come in, it made me afraid; I dared not stir; I listened, no one stirred; I was, however, sure there was some one behind the door; I asked twice who was there—no one answered. More and more alarmed, I pushed my chest of drawers against the door, which had neither lock nor bolt. I still listened—nothing stirred; at the end of half-an-hour, which appeared very

long, I threw myself on my bed; the night passed tranquilly. The next morning I asked the housekeeper for permission to put a bolt on my door, as there was no lock, relating to her my fears of the last night; she answered that I had dreamed, that I must speak to M. Ferrand about it; at my demand he shrugged his shoulders, and told me I was a fool. I did not dare to say anything more.

"Some time after this happened the affair of the diamond. My father, almost desperate, knew not what to do. I related his trouble to Mrs. Seraphin; she answered, 'M. Ferrand is so charitable, that perhaps he will do something for your father.' The same evening I waited on table; M. Ferrand said to me, bluntly, 'Your father has need of thirteen hundred francs: go this night and tell him to come to my office to-morrow; he shall have the money. He is an honest man, and deserves that one should interest himself for him.' At this act of kindness I burst into tears; I did not know how to thank my master; he said to me, in his ordinary rough manner, 'It is well, it is well; what I have done is very simple.' In the evening I came to tell the good news to my father, and the next day—"

"I had the money, against a bill at three months' date, accepted in blank by me," said Morel. "I did like Louise; I wept with gratitude: I called him my benefactor. Oh! he must needs have been wicked indeed to destroy the gratitude and veneration I vowed to him."

"This precaution to make you sign a bill in blank, at such a date that you could not pay it, did not awaken your suspicions?" asked Rudolph.

"No, sir, I thought that the notary only took it for security; besides, he told me I need not think of paying it under two years; every three months it should be renewed for the sake of being regular; yet, at the end of the first term, it was presented, and not being paid, he obtained a judgment against me under another name; but he told me not to be troubled, that it was an error of his clerk."

"He wished thus to have you in his power," said Rudolph.

"Alas! yes, sir; for it was from the date of this judgment he began to—but continue, Louise, continue. I do not know where I am. My head turns. I shall become mad! it is too much—too much!"

Rudolph soothed him, and Louise continued: "I redoubled my zeal to show my gratitude. The house-keeper then held me in great aversion; she often placed me in the wrong by not repeating the orders that M. Ferrand gave her for me; I suffered from this, and would have preferred another place, but the obligation of my father to my master prevented my leaving. It was now three months since he had lent the money; he continued to scold me before Mrs. Seraphin, yet he looked at me sometimes, behind her back, in such a manner as to embarrass me, and he smiled in seeing me blush."

"You comprehend, sir, he was then about to obtain a judgment against me."

"One day," continued Louise, "the housekeeper went out after dinner, as was her custom; the clerks had left the office; they lodged elsewhere. M. Ferrand sent the porter on an errand; I remained in the house alone with my master: I was working in the antechamber; he rang for me. I entered his room; he was standing before the fireplace; I drew near; he turned quickly, and took me by the arm. I was alarmed. I ran into the antechamber and shut the door, holding it with all my strength; the key was on his side."

"You understand, sir. You hear," said Morel to Rudolph, "the conduct of this worthy benefactor."

"At the end of a few moments the door yielded to his efforts," continued Louise. "I blew out the light—he called me. I made no answer. He then said, in a voice trembling with rage, 'If you resist, I will send your father to prison for the money he owes and cannot pay.' I begged him to have pity on me; promised to do everything I could to serve him, and show my gratitude, but I declared nothing could induce me to degrade myself."

"Yes; this is the language of Louise," said Morel, "of my Louise, when she had the right to be proud. But how? Continue—continue."

* * * *

"The next morning after this scene, in spite of the threats of my master, I came here and told my father all. He wished to make me leave the house at once—but there was the prison. The little that I earned was indispensable to the family, since the illness of my mother; and the bad character which M. Ferrand threatened to give me would prevent my seeking or obtaining another place for a long time, perhaps."

"Yes," said Morel, with great bitterness, "we had the cowardice, the selfishness, to let our child return there. Oh! poverty, poverty! how many crimes it causes to be committed!"

"Alas! father; did you not try all means to obtain the money? that being impossible, we had to submit."

"Go on, go on, continue. Your parents have been your executioners; we are guiltier than you are," said the artisan, concealing his face in his hands.

"When I saw my master again," said Louise, "he acted towards me as usual, cross and harshly; he said not a word of the past; the housekeeper continued to torment me; she hardly gave me enough to eat, locked up the bread; sometimes, out of wickedness, she would defile the remains of the dinner before my eyes, for she always ate with

Ferrand. At night I hardly slept; I feared at each moment to see the notary enter my room! he had taken away the drawers with which I had barricaded my door; there only remained a chair, a little table, and my trunk; I always retired to bed dressed. For some time he left me tranquil; he did not even look at me. I began to be at ease, thinking that he thought no more of me. One Sunday he allowed me to go out; I came to announce this good news to my parents. We were all very happy! It is up to this moment you have known all. What remains to tell," and the voice of Louise trembled, "is frightful! I have always concealed it from you."

"Oh, I was very sure of it—very sure that you concealed a secret from me," cried Morel, with a kind of wandering and a singular volubility of expression which astonished Rudolph. "Your pallor and expression should have enlightened me. A hundred times I have spoken to your mother; but she always repelled me. Look at us well! look at us! To escape a prison, we leave our daughter at this monster's. And where does our child go to? To the dock! Because one is poor—yes—but the others—the others." Then stopping, as if to collect his thoughts, Morel struck himself on the forehead, and cried, "Stop, I do not know what I say. My head pains dreadfully. It seems to me I am drunk." And he concealed his face in his hands.

Rudolph, not wishing to let Louise see how much he was alarmed at the incoherent language of her father, said, gravely, "You are not just, Morel; it was not for herself alone, but for her mother, for her children, for yourself, that your poor wife feared the consequences of Louise leaving the notary. Accuse no one. Let all the maledictions, all your hatred fall on one man—this monster of hypocrisy, who placed a girl between dishonour and ruin; the death, perhaps, of her father and his family; on this master, who abused in an infamous manner his power as a master. But patience, I have told you Providence often reserves for great crimes a surprising and frightful vengeance."

The words of Rudolph were stamped with such force and conviction, in speaking of this providential vengeance, that Louise looked at him with surprise, almost with fear.

"Continue, my child," said he; "conceal nothing, this is more important than you think."

"I began, then, to feel some security," said Louise, "when one night Ferrand and his housekeeper both went out, each their own way. They did not dine at home; I remained alone. As usual, they left me some bread and water, and wine; my work finished, I dined, and then fearing to remain alone in the apartments, I went up to my own room, after having lighted M. Ferrand's lamp. When he went out at night no one waited for him. I began to sew, and what was very unusual, by degrees sleep overpowered me. Oh, father," cried Louise, "you will not believe me—you will accuse me of falsehood; and yet, on the corpse of my little sister, I swear I tell you the truth."

"Explain yourself," said Rudolph.

"Alas! sir, for seven months I sought in vain to explain to myself this frightful night. I have almost lost my reason in trying to explore this mystery."

"Oh!" cried the artisan, "what is she going to say?"

"Contrary to my custom, I fell asleep on my chair," continued Louise. "That is the last thing I recollect. Before—before—oh, father, pardon! I swear to you I am not culpable."

"I believe you, I believe you; but speak!"

"I do not know how long I slept, when I awoke I was still in my chamber, but—"

* * * *

"Oh! the wretch, the wretch," cried Rudolph. "Do you know, Morel, what he gave her to drink?" The artisan looked at Rudolph, but made no reply. "The housekeeper, his accomplice, had put in the drink of Louise a soporific, opium, without doubt; the strength, the senses of your child have been paralysed for some hours; when she awoke from this lethargic sleep, the crime was committed."

"Ah! now," cried Louise, "my misfortune is explained; you see, father, I am less guilty than I appear to be. Father, father! answer me!"

The look of the artisan was of a frightful vagueness.

Such horrible perversity could not be understood by so honest and simple-hearted a man. He could hardly comprehend the dreadful revelation. And, besides, it must be said, that for some moments his reason had deserted him; at each moment his ideas became more obscure; then he fell into that vacuity of thought which is to the mind what night is to the sight: formidable symptoms of mental alienation. Yet Morel answered in a quick, dull, and a mournful tone. "Oh! yes, it is very wicked, very wicked, wicked."

And he fell back into his apathy. Rudolph looked at him with anxiety; he thought that the intensity of indignation began to be exhausted with him; the same as after violent griefs, tears are often wanting. Wishing to terminate as soon as possible this sad conversation, Rudolph said to Louise,

"Courage my child; finish unveiling this tissue of horrors."

"Alas! sir, what you have heard is nothing as yet."

* * * *

"Ah! all precautions were taken to conceal his enormity!" said Rudolph.

"Yes, sir, and I was ruined. To all that he said to me I could find no answer. Ignorant what drink I had taken, I could not explain my long sleep. Appearances were against

me. If I complained, everyone would condemn me; it must be so, for to me all was an impenetrable mystery."

CHAPTER IV.

THE CRIME.

RUDOLPH remained confounded at the detestable villany of Ferrand. "Then," said he to Louise, "you did not dare to complain to your father of the odious conduct of the notary?"

"No, sir; I feared he would have thought me the accomplice instead of the victim; and besides, I feared that in his anger, my father would forget that his liberty, the existence of his family, depended entirely upon my master."

"And was his conduct less brutal towards you afterwards?"

"No, sir; to drive away suspicion, when by chance he had the Curé of Bonne Nouvelle and his vicar to dinner, my master addressed me before them with severe reproaches; he prayed the Curé to admonish me; he said that sooner or later I should be lost; that my manners were too free with his clerks; that I was idle; that he kept me out of charity for my father, an honest man with a family, whom he had served. All this was false. I never saw the clerks, they were in a separate building from us."

"And when you found yourself alone with M. Ferrand, how did he explain his conduct towards you before the Curé?"

"He assured me that he joked. But the Curé took these accusations for serious; he told me severely that one must be doubly vicious to act thus in a holy house, where I had religious examples continually under my eyes. To that I did not know what to answer; I held down my head, blushing; my silence, my confusion, turned still more against me; my life was such a burden that several times I was on the point of destroying myself; but I thought of my father, my mother, my brothers and sisters, whom I helped to support. I resigned myself; in the midst of my degradation I found a consolation; at least, my father was saved from prison. A new misfortune overwhelmed me; I was enceinte. I saw myself altogether lost. I do not know why, I had a presentiment that M. Ferrand, in learning an event which should have rendered him less cruel towards me, would increase his bad treatment; I was, however, far from supposing what would happen."

Morel recovered from his momentary aberration, looked around him with astonishment, passed his hand over his face, collected his thoughts, and said to his daughter,

"It seems to me I have forgotten myself for a moment—fatigue—sorrow. What did you say?"

"When M. Ferrand was informed of my situation"—

The artisan made a movement of despair; Rudolph calmed him with a look.

"Go on, I will listen to the end," said Morel. "Go on, go on."

Louise resumed. "I asked M. Ferrand by what means I should conceal my shame. Interrupting me with indignation, and a feigned surprise, he pretended not to understand me; he asked me if I were mad; frightened, I cried 'But, my God, what do you wish to become of me now? If you have no pity on me, have at least, some pity on your child!' 'What a horror!' cried he, raising his hands towards heaven. 'How, wretch! You have the audacity to accuse me of being corrupt enough to descend to a girl of your class! you have effrontery enough to accuse me! I, who have a hundred times repeated before the most respectable witnesses that you would be ruined, vile wanton. Leave my house this moment—I thrust you from my door.'"

Rudolph and Morel remained horror-struck; such atrocity overpowered them.

"Oh! I confess," said Rudolph, "this passes all conception."

Morel said nothing; his eyes became enlarged in a fearful manner; a convulsive spasm contracted his features; he descended from the bench where he was seated, opened quickly a drawer, and took out a strong, very sharp file, with a wooden handle, and rushed towards the door.

Rudolph divining his thoughts, seized him by the arm and stopped him.

"Morel, where are you going to? You will ruin yourself, unfortunate man."

"Take care," cried the artisan, furiously struggling. "I shall commit two crimes, instead of one!" and the madman threatened Rudolph.

"Father, it is our saviour," cried Louise.

"He is mocking us! bah, bah! he wishes to save the notary," answered Morel, completely wild, and contending with Rudoph. At the end of a second, he succeeded in disarming him, opened the door and threw the instrument on the staircase.

Louise ran to the artisan, held him in her arms and said, "Father, he is our benefactor, you have raised your hand on him; come to yourself"

These words recalled Morel to himself; he covered his face with his hands, and, without saying a word, he fell at Rudolph's feet.

"Rise, unfortunate father," said Rudolph kindly. "Patience—patience; I understand your fury, I partake of your hatred; but, in the name even of your vengeance do not compromise it."

"Good heavens!" cried the artisan, raising himself up. "What can justice—law—do in such a case? Poor as we are; when we go and accuse the powerful, rich, and respected man, they will laugh in our face, ah, ah, ah!"

and he laughed convulsively. "And they will be right. Where are our proofs? yes, our proofs? They will not believe us. Therefore, I tell you," cried he, in another storm of madness, "I tell you I have no confidence but in the impartiality of the knife."

"Silence, Morel; grief makes you wander," said Rudolph, suddenly. "Let your daughter speak; moments are precious, the magistrate waits; I must know all—I tell you, all. Continue, my child."

"It is useless, sir," said Louise, "to speak to you of my tears, my prayers; I was disregarded. This took place at ten o'clock in the morning, in the cabinet of M. Ferrand; the priest was to breakfast with him that morning; he entered at the moment my master was loading me with reproaches and outrages. He appeared much vexed at the sight of the priest."

"And what did he say then?"

"He soon made up his mind what course to pursue; he cried, pointing to me, 'Well, reverend sir, I said truly that this creature would be ruined. She is lost—lost for ever; she has just acknowledged to me her fault and her shame, begging me to save her. And to think that I, through pity, have received such a wretch into my house.' 'How,' said the priest to me, with indignation, 'in spite of the salutary counsels which your master has given you so often before me, you have thus degraded yourself? Oh, this is unpardonable.' 'My friend, after the kindness you have shown her and her family, pity would be a weakness.' 'Be inexorable,' said the priest, a dupe, like everybody else, of the hypocrisy of M. Ferrand."

"And you did not at once unmask the scoundrel?" said Rudolph.

"I was terrified, my head turned; I dared not, I could not pronounce a word; yet I wished to speak to defend myself. 'But, sir,' I cried— 'Not a word more, unworthy creature,' said M. Ferrand, interrupting me; 'you have heard the worthy priest. Pity would be weakness; in an hour you leave my house.' Then, without giving me time to answer, he led the priest into another room.

"After the departure of M. Ferrand," continued Louise, "I was for a moment, as it were, delirious. I saw myself driven from his house, not able to get another place, on account of my situation and the bad character my master would give me. I did not doubt but that in his anger he would imprison my father. I did not know what would become of me; I went, for refuge and to weep, to my chamber. At the end of two hours M. Ferrand appeared. 'Is your trunk ready?' said he. 'Have mercy!' I cried, falling at his feet, 'do not send me away in the state in which I am; what will become of me? I can find no other place.' 'So much the better; God will thus punish your conduct and your lies.' 'You dare to say I lie!' cried I, indignantly; 'you dare to say you are not the cause of my ruin?' 'Leave my house at once, you infamous creature, since you persist in your calumnies,' cried he, in a terrible voice. 'And to punish you, to-morrow I will imprison your father.' 'Well; no, no!' said I, aghast, 'I will accuse you no longer, sir—I promise it; but do not drive me away—have pity on my father; the little that I earn here supports my family. Keep me here—I will say nothing—I will conceal everything as long as I can, and then—you can send me away.'

"After renewed supplications, M. Ferrand consented to my prayers; I regarded it as a great favour, so frightful was my condition. Yet, for the five months which followed this cruel scene, I was very unhappy, very cruelly treated; sometimes only M. Germain, whom I saw but seldom, interrogated me with kindness on the subject of my sorrows; but shame forbade my confession."

"Is it not about this time that he came to live here?"

"Yes, sir, he wished for a room near the Temple or the Arsenal; there was one to be let here; it suited him."

"And you never thought of confiding your sorrows to M. Germain?" asked Rudolph.

"No, sir, he was also a dupe of M. Ferrand's; he said he was hard and exacting, but he thought him the most honest man in the world. I passed these five months in tears, in continual agony; with care, I had concealed my situation from all eyes, but I could hope to do so no longer. The future was for me most dreadful; M. Ferrand had declared he would not keep me any longer with him. I was thus about to be deprived of the small resource that aided our family to live. Cursed, driven away by my father; for, after the falsehoods that I had told him to dissipate his suspicions, he would not believe me to be the victim of M. Ferrand. What was to become of me? where was I to fly? where to find a refuge? I had, then, a very wicked idea. I confess this, sir, because I wish to conceal nothing, even that which may cast suspicion on me, and also to show you to what an extremity I was reduced by the cruelty of M. Ferrand. If I had yielded to a fatal thought, would he not have been an accomplice of my crime?"

After a moment's silence, Louise resumed, with an effort, and in a trembling voice, "I had heard from the portress that a quack lived in the house—and—" She could not finish.

Rudolph remembered that at his first call on Mrs. Pipelet he had received from the postman, in her absence, a letter written on coarse paper, in a disguised hand, and on which he had remarked the traces of tears. "And you did write him, unhappy child—three days since? On this latter you have wept; your writing was disguised."

Louise looked at Rudolph with affright. "How do you know, sir?"

"Calm yourself; I was alone in the lodge

of Mrs. Pipelet when this letter was handed in, and it was my chance to receive it."

"Yes, sir; in this letter, without signature, I wrote to M. Bradamante, that, not daring to come to him, I begged he would meet me that evening near the Chateau d'Eau. I was half crazy. I wished to ask his fearful advice. I left my master's house to meet him; but my reason returned. I regained the house; I did not see him. Thus a scene took place, from the consequences of which I am now suffering—M. Ferrand believing me gone out for two hours, while after a very short time I returned.

"In pacing before the little door of the garden, to my great astonishment I saw it open. I entered that way, and I carried the key to the cabinet of M. Ferrand, where it was ordinarily kept. This was, next to his bedchamber, the most retired place in the house; it was there he gave his secret audiences. You will see, sir, why I give you these details. Knowing all the ways of the house very well, after having crossed the dining-room, which was lighted, I entered into the saloon in the dark, then to the cabinet, as I said before. The door of his chamber opened at the moment I placed the key on the table. Hardly had my master perceived me by the light which was burning in his chamber, than he closed the door quickly on a person whom I could not see. Then he threw himself on me, seized me by the throat as if he wished to strangle me, and said to me in a low tone, at once furious and alarmed, 'You were spying; you listened at the door; what did you hear? Answer, answer! or I'll strangle you.' But changing his mind, without giving me time to say a word, he pushed me backward into the dining-room. The office was open; he threw me into it brutally, and locked the door."

"And you heard nothing of his conversation?"

"Nothing, sir; if I had known he had anybody in the room, I should have taken care not to have entered the cabinet; he forbade even Mrs. Seraphin to do so."

"And when you came out of the office, what did he say to you?"

"It was the housekeeper who came to conduct me, and I did not see him again that night. The alarm I had experienced had made me very ill. The next morning, as I came down stairs, I met M. Ferrand. I shuddered in thinking of his threats of the evening previous; what was my surprise when he said to me, almost calmly, 'You know I forbid anyone to come into my cabinet when I have some one in my chamber; but for the short time that you have to remain here, it is useless to scold any more,' and he passed into his office. This moderation surprised me, after the violence of the previous evening. I went on with my usual duties; I went to put in order his sleeping apartment. In arranging some clothes in a dark closet near the alcove, I was suddenly taken very ill; I felt that I was about to faint. In falling, I grasped at a cloak which was hanging against the wall. I dragged it along with me; it covered me completely as I lay upon the floor. When I came to myself, the glass-door of this closet was shut. I heard the voice of Ferrand. He spoke very loud. Recollecting the scene of the previous evening, I thought myself killed if I stirred. I supposed that, concealed under the mantle which had fallen on me, my master, in shutting the door, had not perceived me. If he discovered me, how could I make him believe that my presence was accidental? I held my breath, and, in spite of myself, I heard the end of this conversation, which doubtless had been commenced for some time."

"Who was the person who was talking with him?" asked Rudolph.

"I am ignorant, sir; I did not know the voice."

"And what did they say?"

"The conversation had lasted for some time, doubtless, for this is all I heard. 'Nothing can be plainer,' said this unknown voice. 'A queer fish, called Bras-Rouge (Red Arm), a determined smuggler, has brought me, for the affair I have just spoken about, in connection with a family of fresh-water pirates, who are established at the point of a little island near Asnières. They are the greatest bandits in the land; the father and grandfather have both been guillotined, two of the sons are to the galleys for life; but the mother, three sons, and two daughters are left, all as great villains one as the other. It is said that at night, to rob on both sides of the Seine, they come down in their boats sometimes as far as Bercy. They are folks who will kill the first comer for a crown; but we have no need of them; it suffices if they will give hospitality to your country lady. The Martials (the name of my pirates) will pass in her eyes for an honest family of fishermen. I will go on your account, and make two or three visits to your young lady; I will order her certain potions, and at the end of eight days she will make acquaintance with Asnières Cemetery. In the villages, a death passes like a letter through the post-office, while at Paris they scrutinise too closely. But when will you send your country girl to the island, so that I can advise the Martials what part they have to play?' 'She will arrive to-morrow, and the day after she will be there,' answered Ferrand; 'and I will inform her that the Doctor Vincent will take care of her on my account.' 'Agreed for the name of Vincent,' said the voice; 'I like that as well as any other.'"

"What is this new mystery of crime and infamy?" said Rudolph, more and more surprised.

"New? no, sir; you will see that it has reference to a crime that you do know," an-

swered Louise; and she continued, 'I heard the movement of chairs; the conversation was at an end. 'I do not ask you to be secret,' said M. Ferrand; 'you hold me as I hold you.' 'That proves that we can serve, but never injure one another,' answered the voice; 'see my zeal. I received your letter last night at ten o'clock, this morning I am here. Farewell, accomplice; do not forget the Island of Asnières, the fisher Martial, and Dr. Vincent. Thanks to these three magical words, your country girl has only eight days left.' 'Stop,' said M. Ferrand, 'while I go and unbolt the door of my cabinet, and see if there is anyone in the antechamber, that you may go out by the garden as you came in.' M. Ferrand went out a moment, and then returned, and finally I heard him go off with the unknown person. You may imagine my alarm, sir, during this conversation, and my horror at knowing such a secret. Two hours after this conversation, Mrs. Seraphin came to seek me in my chamber, where I had gone more trembling and sick than I had yet been. 'M. Ferrand wants you,' said she; 'you have more good luck than you deserve; come, descend. You are very pale; what you are going to learn will give you more colour.'

"I followed Mrs. Seraphin; M. Ferrand was in his cabinet. At seeing him, I shuddered in spite of myself; yet he had a less wicked look than usual; he looked at me fixedly for a long time, as if he wished to read my thoughts. I cast down my eyes. 'You appear very ill,' said he. 'Yes, sir,' I answered, astonished that he did not address me familiarly as usual. 'It is very plain,' added he, 'it is in consequence of your situation; but notwithstanding your lies, your bad conduct, and your indiscretion of yesterday,' added he, in a softened tone, 'I have pity on you. Although I have treated you as you deserved before the curé of the parish, such an affair as this will be a scandal to my house; and, moreover, your family will be in despair. I consent, under these circumstances, to come to your assistance.' 'Ah, sir,' I cried, 'these words of kindness on your part make me forget all.' 'Forget what?' asked he sharply. 'Nothing, nothing; pardon me, sir,' answered I, fearing to irritate him, and believing in his professions of pity. 'Listen to me,' said he; 'you will go to see your father to-day; you will announce to him that I am going to send you for two or three months in the country to take charge of a house I have just bought; during your absence I will send him your wages. To-morrow you will leave Paris; I will give you a letter of recommendation for Mrs. Martial, the mother of a family of honest fishermen who live near Asnières. You will require to say you came from the country, nothing more. Later you will know the object of this letter, all for your interest. Mrs. Martial will treat you as her child; a physician, a friend of mine, Dr. Vincent, will take you under his charge. You see how good I am for you!'"

"What a horrible plot!" cried Rudolph. "Now I comprehend all. Believing that the evening previous you had become possessed of a secret of great importance to him, he wished to get rid of you. He had probably some interest in deceiving his accomplice, in representing you as a girl from the country. What must have been your affright at this proposition?"

"It was a great blow. I was completely bewildered; I knew not what to answer; I looked at M. Ferrand with affright; my mind wandered. I was about, perhaps, to risk my life in telling him that I had overheard his projects in the morning, when, happily, I recollected the new dangers to which this would expose me. 'You do not comprehend me, then?' asked he, with impatience. 'Yes, sir: but,' said I, trembling, 'I prefer not to go to the country.' 'Why not? You will be perfectly well taken care of where I shall send you.' 'No, no, I will not go; I prefer to remain in Paris, near my family; I had rather confess all, die with shame, if it is necessary.' 'You refuse me!' said M. Ferrand, restraining his anger, and looking at me with attention. 'Why have you changed your mind so quickly? Just now you accepted.' I saw that if he suspected me I was lost; I answered that I did not think that he meant me to leave Paris and my family.' 'But you will dishonour your family, wretch,' cried he; and not being able any longer to contain himself, he seized me by the arm, and pushed me so violently that I fell. 'I give you until after to-morrow,' cried he; 'to-morrow you shall leave this to go to the Martials, or to tell your father I have sent you away, and that he goes the same day to prison.' I remained alone, stretched on the earth; I had not the strength to get up. Mrs. Seraphin came, and with her assistance I regained my chamber. I threw myself on my bed; I remained there until night.

* * * * *

"Amid the horrors of this frightful, solitary night, I had a moment of bitter joy: it was when I pressed my child in my arms." And the voice of Louise was suffocated with her tears.

Morel had listened to the story of his daughter with an apathy and indifference which alarmed Rudolph. Yet, seeing her in tears, he looked fixedly at her and said, "She weeps—she weeps; why, then, does she weep? Oh, yes; I know, I know—the notary. Continue, my poor Louise; you are my child. I love you still—just now I did not know you; my tears obscured my sight. Oh! my head—my head—it gives me great pain."

"You see I am not culpable; is it not so, father?"

"Yes, yes."

"It is a great sorrow—but I feared the notary so much!"

"The notary? Oh! I believe you—he is so bad—so wicked!"

"You pardon me now!"

"Yes."

"Truly?"

"Yes, truly. Oh, I love you still—go—although—I cannot—say—do you see—because—oh! my head! my head!"

Louise looked at Rudolph with alarm.

"He suffers; let him compose himself. Continue."

"I pressed my child to my heart. I was astonished not to hear it breathe, but I said to myself, the respiration of so young a child can hardly be heard: and yet it seemed to me that it was very cold. I had no light. I waited until dawn, trying to warm it as well as I could. At daylight I found it was stiff—icy. I placed my hand on its heart: it did not beat—it was dead."

And Louise burst into bitter sobs.

"Oh! at this moment," continued she, "thoughts passed impossible to describe. I remember it confusedly as a dream; it was at once despair, terror, anger, and, above all, I was seized with another alarm: I no longer dreaded that Ferrand would strangle me, but I feared that if my child was found dead at my side, I should be accused of having killed it. Then I had but one thought, that of concealing it from all eyes; in that way, my dishonour would not be known; I would no longer have to dread the anger of my father; I should escape the vengeance of Ferrand; then I could leave his house, procure another place, and continue to earn something towards the support of my family. Alas! sir, such are the reasons which induced me to acknowledge nothing, to conceal the body of my child from all eyes. It was wrong, certainly; but the position I was in, overwhelmed on all sides, crushed by long sufferings, almost delirious, I did not reflect to what I exposed myself if I was discovered."

"What tortures! what tortures!" said Rudolph, overcome.

"Daylight increased," continued Louise: "in a short time every one would be awake in the house. I hesitated no longer. I wrapped up my child as well as I could; I descended very softly; I went to the end of the garden to make a hole in the ground to bury it, but it had frozen all night—the earth was too hard. Then I hid the body at the bottom of a kind of cellar where no one entered in winter. I covered it with an empty flower-box, and I returned to my room without seeing anyone. Of all I tell you, sir, I have but a confused idea. Feeble as I was, I can as yet hardly comprehend how I had the nerve to do all this. At nine o'clock, Mrs. Seraphin came to know why I was not yet up. I said that I was so ill, that I begged her to let me remain in bed all day; the next day I would quit the house, since M. Ferrand sent me away. At the end of one hour he came himself. 'You are worse; this is the consequence of your self-will,' said he. 'If you had profited by my offers, to-day you would have been established with kind people, who would have taken every care of you; however, I will not be so inhuman as to let you suffer; to-night Dr. Vincent will come to see you.' At this threat I shuddered with fear. I answered that I was wrong the night before to refuse his offers; that I accepted them; but that, as yet being too ill to leave, I would go the next day but one to the Martials;' and that it was useless to send for Dr. Vincent. I only wished to gain time; I was decided to leave the house, and to go to my father. I hoped in this manner he would be ignorant of all. But, deceived by my promise, M. Ferrand was almost affectionate towards me, and recommended me, for the first time in his life, to the care of Mrs. Seraphin.

"I passed the day in mental agony, trembling at each moment that chance would cause a discovery of the body of my child. I only desired one thing—that the cold might cease, so that I might be able to dig a grave. It snowed—that gave me hopes. I remained all day in bed. The night being come, I waited until everyone was asleep. I had strength to get up to go to the wood-pile to look for a hatchet to cut some wood to make a hole in the frozen ground. After infinite trouble I at last succeeded; then I took the body, I wept over it again, and I buried it as I could in the little flower-box. I did not know the prayer for the dead; I said a pater and an ave, praying God to receive it. I thought my courage would have failed me when I covered it with the earth. A mother interring her child! At length I succeeded. Oh! what it cost me! I placed the snow over the grave, so that nothing should be seen. The moon gave me light. When all was finished I could not make up my mind to come away. Poor little thing! in the frozen ground—under the snow. Although it was dead, it seemed to me that it must feel the cold. At length I returned to my chamber. I went to my bed with a violent fever. In the morning M. Ferrand sent to know how I was. I answered that I felt rather better, and that I should certainly be ready to leave for the country the next day. I remained all this day still in bed, in order to gain strength. In the evening I arose. I went to the kitchen to warm myself. I remained late, all alone. I went to the garden to say a last prayer. At the moment I ascended towards my chamber, I met M. Germain on the landing-place of the cabinet, where he sometimes worked; he was very pale. He said to me, quickly, placing a rouleau in my hand, 'Your father will be arrested early to-morrow morning; here is the money; as soon as it is day run to his house. It is only to-day I have found out Ferrand; he is a bad man; I will unmask him. Do not, above all, say that you have

this money from me.' And M. Germain, not giving me time to thank him, descended the stairs quickly."

CHAPTER V.

MADNESS.

LOUISE continued: "This morning, before anyone was up, I came here with the money, but it was not sufficient; and, without your generosity, he would not have escaped the bailiffs. Probably, after my departure, some one has gone to my room and discovered some traces which has led to this discovery. A last service I ask of you, sir," said Louise, drawing out the rouleau of gold from her pocket; "will you hand this money to M. Germain? I promised him not to tell anyone that he was employed at Ferrand's; but since you know it I have not been indiscreet. Now, sir, I repeat, before God, who hears me, and before you, I have not said a word that is not true. I have not sought to"—but, interrupting herself suddenly, Louise, much alarmed, cried, "Oh, sir! look at my father! look at him! What is the matter with him?"

Morel had listened to the last part of this narrative with sombre indifference, which Rudolph had explained to himself by attributing it to the overwhelming grief of this unhappy man. After so many violent shocks, so oft repeated, his tears were dried up, his sensibility blunted—he has not even strength enough left to vent his indignation, thought Rudolph.

He was mistaken. Like the flickering light of a lamp about to expire, the reason of Morel, already strongly shaken, vacillated for some time, showed forth now and then some last rays of intelligence, and then suddenly became obscured.

Absolutely a stranger to what was said, to what passed around him, for some moments the artisan had become mad!

Although his wheel was placed the other side of his work-table, and he had in his hands neither diamonds nor tools, the artisan, attentively occupied, imitated his ordinary occupations. He accompanied this pantomime with a clacking noise with his tongue, like the wheel when in operation.

"Oh, sir!" said Louise, with increased alarm; "look at my father!" Then approaching him, she said, "Father! father!"

Morel looked at his daughter with that vacant stare peculiar to lunatics. Without ceasing for a moment his imaginary occupation, he answered, in a soft and mournful voice, "I owe thirteen hundred francs to the notary, the price of Louise's blood. I must work, work, work! Oh! I will pay, pay, pay!"

"This is not possible! This cannot last! He is not altogether mad, is he?" cried Louise, in a heartrending tone. "He will come to himself—it is only momentary"—

"Morel, my friend," said Rudolph, "we are here. Your daughter is alongside of you; she is innocent."

"Thirteen hundred francs," said the artisan, without looking at Rudolph, and continuing his imaginary occupation.

"Father," cried Louise, throwing herself at his feet, and taking hold of his hands, "it is I, Louise!"

"Thirteen hundred francs," repeated he, endeavouring to disengage himself from Louise; "thirteen hundred francs, or else," added he, in a low and confidential tone, "or else Louise is guillotined," and he began to turn his wheel.

Louise uttered a piercing cry. "He is mad," cried she, "he is mad! and it is I, I who am the cause. Oh, yet it is not my fault; I did not wish to do wrong; it is this monster!"

"Come, poor child, courage!" said Rudolph, "let us hope. This madness will be but momentary. Your father has suffered too much, his reason has become weakened, he will get better."

"But my mother—my grandmother—my brothers and sister! what will become of them?" cried Louise. "See, they are deprived of both my father and myself. They will die with hunger, with poverty, and despair!"

"Am I not here? Be calm, they shall want for nothing. Courage, I pray you; your revelation will cause the punishment of a great criminal. You have convinced me of your innocence; it shall certainly be known and acknowledged."

"Oh, sir, you see dishonour—madness—death; these are the evils he has caused—this man; nothing can be done to him—nothing. Ah, this thought completes all my troubles!"

"Far from that; let a contrary thought aid you in supporting them."

"What do you say, sir?"

"Carry with you the certainty that you shall be avenged."

"Avenged?"

"Yes, I swear to you," answered Rudolph, with solemnity, "that, his crimes proved, this man shall severely expiate the dishonour, madness, and death he has caused. If the laws are powerless, if his cunning and address equal his misdeeds, to his cunning shall be opposed cunning—to his misdeeds, misdeeds—but which shall be to them what the just and avenging punishment, inflicted on the culpable by an inexorable hand, is to the cowardly and concealed murder."

"Ah, sir, may God hear you! It is not myself I wish to revenge, it is my crazy father; it is"— then, turning to her father, she cried, "Father, farewell." They take me to prison—I shall never see you more; it is your Louise who bids you farewell—father, father, father!"

At this touching appeal nothing responded; nothing responded in this poor annihilated

mind—nothing. The paternal cords, always the last broken, vibrated no more.

The garret door opened, and the officer entered.

"My time is up, sir," said he to Rudolph. "I declare to you, with regret, that it is impossible for me to wait any longer."

"The conversation is terminated, sir," answered Rudolph, bitterly, pointing to the artisan. "Louise has nothing more to say to her father; he has nothing more to hear from his daughter—he is mad."

"Good God! just what I feared. Ah, it is frightful," cried the magistrate. And, approaching quickly to the artisan, after a moment's examination, he was convinced of the sad reality. "Ah, sir," said he, sadly, to Rudolph, "I have already made sincere wishes that the innocence of this young girl may be proved. But, now, I will not confine myself to wishes; no, no, I will tell of this last dreadful blow; and, do not doubt it, the judges will have a motive the more to find her innocent."

"Well, well, sir," said Rudolph, "in acting thus, it is not only your duty you fulfil, but you are performing a worthy part."

"Believe me, sir, some of our missions are so painful, that it is with happiness, with gratitude, that we interest ourselves in what is good and virtuous."

"One word more, sir. The revelations of Louise Morel have evidently proved to me her innocence. Can you inform me how her pretended crime has been discovered, or, rather, denounced?"

"This morning," said the magistrate, "a woman in the employ of M. Ferrand, notary, came and declared to me that, after the precipitate flight of Louise Morel, who she knew was enceinte, she had gone up into the chamber of this young girl, and that she had there found traces of a clandestine accouchement; after some investigations, some footsteps in the snow had led to the discovery of a new-born child interred in the garden. On the relation of this woman, I went to the Rue de Sentier. I found M. Jacques Ferrand very indignant that such a thing should have occurred in his house. The priest of Bonne-Nouvelle Church, whom he had sent for, also declared to me that the girl, Morel, had acknowledged her fault before him one day; that she had implored the pity and indulgence of her master, and that, still more, he had often heard M. Ferrand give Louise Morel the most severe reprimands, predicting that, sooner or later, she would be ruined. 'A prediction which had just been realised so unfortunately,' added the priest. The indignation of M. Ferrand," continued the magistrate, "appeared to me so real that I partook of it. He told me that, without doubt, Louise Morel had taken refuge at her father's. I came here at once; the crime being flagrant, I had the right to proceed to an immediate arrest."

Rudolph restrained himself in hearing the indignation of M. Ferrand spoken of. He said to the magistrate, "I thank you a thousand times, sir, for your kindness and for the assistance you tender Louise; I shall conduct this unfortunate man to a lunatic hospital, as well as the mother of his wife." Then, addressing Louise, who yet kneeled before her father, trying in vain to restore him to reason, "Be resigned, my child, to go without embracing your mother; spare her this touching farewell. Be assured as to her welfare—nothing shall henceforth be wanting—I will find a woman who will take care of your mother, and your brothers and sister under the superintendence of your good neighbour, Miss Dimpleton. As to your father, nothing shall be spared, that his cure shall be rapid and complete. Courage, then; believe me, virtuous people are often harshly tried by misfortunes, but they always come out of these struggles purer, stronger, and more respected."

* * * * *

Two hours after the arrest of Louise, the artisan and the old idiot were, by the orders of Rudolph, conducted to Charenton; they were to have chamber treatment, and receive particular care and attention. Morel left the house without assistance; indifferent, he went where they took him; his madness was inoffensive and sad. The grandmother had hunger; they showed her food, she followed this food.

The diamonds and rubies confided to the wife of the artisan were the same day given to Mrs. Mathieu, the broker, who came to get them. Unfortunately, this woman was watched and followed by Tortillard, who knew the value of the pretended false jewels, from a conversation he had overheard when Morel was arrested by the bailiffs. The son of Bras-Rouge (Red Arm) ascertained that she lived at No. 11, Boulevard Saint Denis.

Miss Dimpleton informed Morel, with much tact, of the lunacy of her husband and the imprisonment of Louise. At first she wept much, uttering sorrowful cries. When, the first spasms of grief over, the poor creature, weak and unsettled, consoled herself by degrees in seeing herself and children surrounded by comforts which they owed to the generosity of their benefactor.

Rudolph's thoughts were bitter in thinking of the revelations of Louise.

CHAPTER VI.

JACQUES FERRAND.

AT the time when the events passed which we relate, at one of the extremities of the Rue du Sentier could have been seen a long wall, much cracked, and covered with a coating of plaster, the top protected with pieces of broken glass; this wall, forming the boundary on this side

of the garden of Jacques Ferrand, the notary, extended to a building situated on the street, of only one story and a garret. Two large brass plates, the sign of the notary's office, flanked the worm-eaten gate, the primitive appearance of which was no longer to be distinguished under the mud which covered it. This door led to a covered passage; on the right was the lodge of an old porter, half deaf, who was to the fraternity of tailors what Pipelet was to the bootmakers; on the left a stable, which served the purposes of a cellar, wash-house, wood-house, and of a growing colony of rabbits, lodged in a manger by the porter, who consoled himself from the pangs of a recent bereavement, in the death of his wife, by raising these domestic animals.

Alongside the lodge was the crooked, narrow, and obscure staircase, leading to the office, as the clients were informed by a hand painted black, the forefinger pointing to these words on the wall: "Office—Second Floor." On one side of a large paved court, overgrown with grass, were to be seen the unoccupied carriage-houses; on the other, a rusty iron railing, which inclosed the garden; at the end the pavilion, where the notary alone dwelt.

A flight of eight or ten steps of tottering, disjointed stones, covered with moss and worn by time, led to this house, composed of a kitchen and other offices under ground, two floors and an attic, where Louise had slept.

This pavilion appeared also in a great state of decay; immense cracks were to be seen in the walls; the windows and blinds, once painted gray, had become with age almost black; the six windows of the first story, looking upon the court, had no curtains; the glasses were almost incrusted with dirt; on the ground floor they were rather cleaner, and were hung with faded yellow curtains, red flowered. On the side towards the garden the pavilion had but four windows; two were walled up.

This garden, overgrown with wild briars, seemed abandoned; not a single border, not a bed: a cluster of elms, five or six large trees, some acacias and elders, a yellow grass-plot, walks encumbered with brambles, and bounded by a high wall. Such was the sad aspect of the garden and habitation.

To this appearance, or rather to this reality, Ferrand attached great importance. To vulgar eyes, a carelessness of comfort and prosperity passes almost always for disinterestedness; uncleanliness for austerity.

Comparing the grand financial luxury of some notaries, or the reported toilettes of their wives, to the gloomy mansion of M. Ferrand, so contemptuous of elegance and splendour, the clients felt a kind of respect, or, rather, of blind confidence for this man, who, from the number of his employers and the fortune he was supposed to possess, could have said, like many of his brethren, "My equipage, my country-house, my opera-box," &c., and who, far from that, lived with great economy; thus deposits, legacies on trust, investments, all those affairs in fine which depend upon the most tried integrity, or the most perfect good faith, flowed into the hands of Ferrand. In living as he did, the notary consulted his taste. He detested society, pomp, pleasures dearly bought; had it been otherwise, he would have, without hesitation, sacrificed his most lively wishes to the appearances which it was important to give himself.

Some words on the character of this man.

He was a son of the grand family of misers.

Avarice is, above all, a negative, passive passion.

Yet Jacques Ferrand risked, and risked much.

He counted on his cunning—it was extreme; on his hypocrisy—it was profound; on his understanding—it was fertile and pliable; on his audacity—it was infernal—to assure impunity to his crimes, and they were already numerous.

One single passion, or rather appetite, but most disgraceful, ignoble, shameful, but almost ferocious, raised him often to frenzy—lust.

Save this weakness, Jacques Ferrand loved but gold.

He loved gold for the sake of gold.

Not for the enjoyments it procured; he was stoical.

Notwithstanding his great cunning, this man had committed two or three errors which the most crafty criminals hardly ever escape from.

Forced by circumstances, it is true, he had two accomplices; this great fault, as he said himself, had been repaired in part; neither of his accomplices could betray him without betraying themselves; nor could any advantage be derived from their denouncing the notary and themselves to public vindictiveness. He was therefore on this head quite at rest.

Some words now on the personal appearance of Ferrand, and we will introduce the reader into the notary's study, where he will find out the principal personages. Ferrand had passed his fiftieth year. He did not appear more than forty; he was of medium size, round-shouldered, square-built, strong, thick-set, red-haired, shaggy as a bear. His hair lay smooth on his temples, the top of his head was bald, his eyebrows hardly to be perceived; his bilious-looking skin was covered with large freckles; but when any lively emotion agitated it, this yellow, clayey visage filled with blood, and became a livid red.

His face was as flat as a death's head, his nose crushed down, his lips so thin, so imperceptible, that his mouth seemed cut in his face; when he smiled in a wicked and sinister manner, the ends of his teeth could be seen, black and decayed. Closely shaved to his temples, this man's countenance had an ex-

pression austère, sanctified, impassible, rigid, cold and reflecting; his little black eyes—quick, piercing, restless—were hidden by large green spectacles.

Jacques Ferrand had excellent sight, but under the shelter of his spectacles he had great advantages, observing without being observed; he knew how much a glance of the eye is often and involuntarily significant. In spite of his imperturbable audacity, he had encountered, two or three times in his life, certain powerful looks, before which he had been forced to quail. Now, in some circumstances, it is fatal to cast down your eye before the man who interrogates, accuses, or judges you. The large spectacles of Ferrand were therefore a kind of covered breastwork, from whence he could attentively examine the manœuvres of the enemy; for many such he had to encounter, because many found themselves more or less his dupe.

He affected in his dress a negligence which reached to uncleanliness, or rather it was naturally rusty and mean; his face shaved but once in two or three days, his dirty bald head, his black nails, old, snuff-coloured coats, greasy hats, threadbare cravats, black woollen hose, and coarse shoes, recommended him singularly to his clients, by giving him an air of detachment from the world, and a perfume of practical philosophy which charmed them. "To what pleasures—what passions—could the notary," said they, "sacrifice the confidence which was shown him? He gained, perhaps, sixty thousand francs a year, and his household was composed of a servant and an old housekeeper; his sole pleasure was to go every Sunday to mass and vespers; he knew no opera comparable to the solemn sounds of the organ, no company which could equal an evening passed at his fireside with the parish priest, after a frugal dinner. Finally, he placed his delight in his probity, his pride in his honour, his happiness in his religion."

Such was the opinion of many concerning Jacques Ferrand, this good and excellent man.

CHAPTER VII.

THE OFFICE.

His office resembled all offices, his clerks all other clerks. It was reached by an antechamber furnished with four old chairs. In the office, properly so called, surrounded by shelves furnished with paper boxes, containing documents belonging to the clients of the notary, five young men, bending over desks of black wood, laughed, talked, or scribbled incessantly. An adjoining room, in which usually remained the head clerk, then an empty room, which, for the sake of secrecy, separated the notary's *sanctum* from the other offices, such was this laboratory of all kinds and sorts. Two o'clock had just struck by an old cuckoo clock, placed between the two windows of the office; agitation seemed to reign among the clerks, which some fragments of their conversation will explain.

"Certainly, if any one had told me that François Germain was a thief," said one of the young men, "I should have answered, 'You are a liar!'"

"And I!"

"And I also!"

"I! it produced such an effect on me to see him arrested and taken away by the guard, that I could not eat my breakfast. I was recompensed, however, for it spared me from eating the daily mess of Mother Seraphin."

"Seventeen thousand francs—it is a sum!"

"A famous sum!"

"And to think that for seventeen months since he has been cashier, he never has been wanting a centime in his cash account!"

"As for me, I think master was wrong to arrest Germain, since the poor fellow swore that he had only taken thirteen hundred francs in gold."

"Yes. And so much the more, that he brought back the amount this morning at the moment the master had sent for the guard!"

"That is the consequence of being of such a rigid probity as master. Such people are always without pity."

"Never mind; one ought always to think twice before ruining a poor young man who always conducted himself well until now."

"Mr. Ferrand would reply to that, 'It was for the sake of example.'"

"Example of what? It is of no use to those who are honest; and those who are not know well enough that they are likely to be discovered if they steal."

"This house is, however, a good customer for the officer."

"How?"

"Why, this morning poor Louise; just now Germain."

"As for me, the affair of Germain don't appear too clear."

"But he has acknowledged it?"

"He confessed that he had taken thirteen hundred francs—yes; but he maintained that he had not taken the remaining fifteen thousand francs in bank bills, and the remaining seven hundred francs that were missing."

"Exactly; since he acknowledged one thing, why not the other?"

"It is true, one is as much punished for five hundred as for fifteen thousand francs."

"Yes; but one keeps the fifteen thousand francs, and on coming out of prison, that makes a nice little establishment, a rogue would say."

"Not so bad."

"One may well say there is something in that."

"And Germain, who always defended master when we called him a Jesuit!"

"It is nevertheless true. 'Why hasn't master a right to go to mass?' he would say; 'you have the right to stay away.'"

"Stop, here is Chalomel; how he will be astonished!"

"About what! what! My good fellows, is there anything new concerning poor Louise?"

"You would have known, lazybones, if you hadn't been absent so long."

"Hold; you think it is only a hop, skip and jump from here to the Rue de Chaillot."

"Well; this famous Viscount de Saint Rémy?"

"Has he not come yet!"

"No."

"His carriage was all ready, and his valet told me that he would come at once; but he did not appear pleased, the domestic said. Oh! that is a fine hotel; one might say it had belonged to the lords of the olden time, as are spoken of in Faublas. Oh! Faublas! he is my hero, my model!" said Chalomel, putting away his umbrella and taking off his overshoes.

"I believe that this viscount is in debt, and there are writs out against him."

"A writ for thirty-four thousand francs which has been sent here, since it is here he must come to pay it; the creditor prefers it, why, I know not."

"He must be able to pay it now, because he returned last night from the country, where he has been concealed for three days to escape the bailiffs."

"But why did they not levy on his furniture!"

"He is not such an ass! The house is not his; the furniture is in the name of his valet, who is looked upon as hiring him furnished lodgings, in the same way that his horses and carriages are in the name of his coachman, who says he lets them out to the viscount at so much per month. Oh! he is cunning, this Viscount de Saint Rémy. But what is that you were talking about? has anything new hapened here?"

"Just imagine—about two hours since, master came in here like a madman: 'Germain is not here?' cried he. 'No, sir.' 'Well! the scoundrel has robbed me, last night, of seventeen thousand francs?' continued the governor."

"Germain steal! Come, come, draw it mild."

"You shall see. 'How, sir! are you sure? It is not possible!' we all cried."

"'I tell you, gentlemen, that I put yesterday, in the desk where he works, fifteen notes of a thousand francs, besides two thousand francs in gold in a small box: all has disappeared.' At this moment Marriton the porter came in and said, 'The guard is coming.'"

"And Germain?"

"Stop a moment. The governor said to the porter, 'As soon as Germain comes, send him here without telling him anything. I wish to confound him before you, gentlemen,' continued the governor. At the end of fifteen minutes poor Germain arrived, as if nothing was the matter; Mother Seraphin came to bring us our breakfast; she saluted the governor, and said good-day to us very tranquilly. 'Germain, do you not breakfast?' said M. Ferrand. 'No, sir, I am not hungry, I thank you.' 'You come very late?' 'Yes, sir, I have been to Belleville this morning.' 'To conceal, doubtless, the money you have stolen from me,' cried M. Ferrand with a terrible voice,"

"And Germain?"

"Oh! the poor boy became as pale as death, stammering, 'Sir, I beg you, do not ruin me.'"

"He had stolen?"

"Now do wait, Chalomel. 'Do not ruin me,' said he to the governor. 'You acknowledge then, wretch?' 'Yes, sir; but here is the money that is wanting. I thought I should be able to return it this morning before you were up; unfortunately a friend, who had a small sum of mine, and whom I thought to find at home last night, had been at Belleville for two days; I was obliged to go there this morning, which has caused my delay. Pardon me, sir, do not ruin me! In taking this money, I knew I could return it this morning. Here are the thirteen hundred francs in gold!' 'You have robbed me of fifteen notes of one thousand francs each, that were in a green book, and two thousand francs in gold!' 'I! never!' cried poor Germain. 'I took the thirteen hundred francs, but not one penny more. I have seen no pocket-book in the drawer; there was only two thousand francs in gold in a box.' 'Oh! the infamous liar!' cried the master. 'You have stolen thirteen hundred francs, you could well steal more; justice will decide. Oh! I shall be without pity for such a frightful breach of confidence. It will be an example.' Finally the guard arrived, with an officer to make out a commitment; they carried him off, and that's all!"

"Can it be possible? Germain, the cream of honest people!"

"It has appeared to us quite as singular."

"After all, it must be confessed, Germain was reserved; he never would tell where he lived."

"That is true."

"He always had a mysterious air."

"That's no reason why he should steal the money."

"Doubtless. It is a remark I make."

"Ah! well, this is news! it is as if some one had given me a stunner on the head—Germain—who looked so honest; who would have died without confession!"

"One would have said that he had a presentiment of his misfortune."

"Why?"

"For some time past he looked as if something troubled him."

"It was, perhaps, concerning Louise."

"Louise?"

"Oh! I only repeat what Mother Seraphin said this morning."

"What?"

"That he was the lover of Louise, and the"—

"Oh! the cunning fellow."

"Stop, stop, stop!"

"Bah!"

"It is not true!"

"How do you know that, Chalomel?"

"It is not two weeks since, that Germain told me, in confidence, that he was dead in love with a little sewing girl, whom he had known in the house where he lived; he had tears in his eyes when he spoke to me about her."

"Oh!"

"He says that Faublas is his hero, and yet he is simple enough, stupid enough, not to comprehend that one can be in love with one and the love of another."

"I tell you that Germain spoke seriously."

At this moment the chief clerk entered the office.

"Well," said he, "Chalomel, have you finished all your errands?"

"Yes, M. Dubois, I have been to M. de Saint Rémy: he will be here shortly to pay."

"And to Countess M'Gregor?"

"Likewise; here is the answer."

"And to Countess de Orbigny?"

"She is much obliged; she arrived yesterday from Normandy, she did not expect an answer so soon; here is her letter. I have also been to the Marquis d'Harville's steward as he required, for the charges on the contract I signed the other day at the hotel."

"You told him that it was not pressing?"

"Yes, but he would pay it. There is the money. Ah! I forgot that this card was here, below, at the porter's; the words in pencil written underneath by the porter; this gentleman asked for M. Ferrand; he left this."

"'WALTER MURPHY,' read the chief clerk; and then in pencil, '*Will return at three o'clock on important business.*' I do not know this name."

"Oh! I forgot," continued Chalomel; "M. Badinot said it was all right, that M. Ferrand should do as he pleased; that would be always right."

"He did not give a written answer?"

"No sir, he said he hadn't time."

"Very well."

"M. Charles Robert will also come in the course of the day to speak to the governor; it appears he fought a duel yesterday with the Duke of Lucenay."

"Is he wounded?"

"I believe not, or they would have told me of it at his house."

"Look! here is a carriage stopping."

"Oh! the fine horses, are they not mettlesome?"

"And the fat English coachman, with his white wig and brown livery, with silver lace and epaulettes like a colonel!"

"An ambassador, surely."

"And the chasseur, has not he enough silver lace?"

"And grand mustachios."

"Hold!" said Chalomel, "it is the carriage of the Viscount de Saint Rémy."

"Ain't it stylish? Whew!"

Soon afterward Saint Rémy entered the office. We have described the charming face, the exquisite elegance, the ravishing bearing of Saint Rémy, arrived the previous evening from Arnouville Farm, belonging to the Duchess Lucenay, where he had found a refuge from the bailiffs.

Saint Rémy entered the office hastily, his hat on, his manner haughty and proud, his eyes half closed, asking in a very impertinent way, without looking at any one, "The notary? where is he?"

"M. Ferrand is busy in his private office," answered the head clerk; "if you will wait a moment, sir, he will receive you."

"I wait?"

"But, sir"—

"There are no but sirs; go and tell him that M. de Saint Rémy is here. I find it very singular that this notary makes me wait in his antechamber; it smells of the stove."

"Please to pass into the next room, sir," said the clerk; "I will go at once and inform M. Ferrand."

Saint Rémy shrugged his shoulders, and followed the head clerk. At the end of a quarter of an hour, which seemed to him very long, and changed his contempt into rage, Saint Rémy was introduced into the cabinet of the notary. Nothing could be more curious than the contrast of these two men, both profound physiognomists, and generally accustomed to judge at a first glance with whom they had to deal.

Saint Rémy saw Jacques Ferrand for the first time. He was struck with the characteristics of this wan, rigid, impassible face; the expression concealed by the large green spectacles, the head half-hidden in an old black silk cap.

The notary was seated before his desk in a leathern arm-chair, beside a broken-down fireplace, filled with ashes, in which were smoking two black stumps. Curtains of green muslin, almost in tatters, suspended from iron rods, concealed the lower part of the windows, and cast into this cabinet, already dark enough, a dull and disagreeable light. Shelves of black wood, filled with labelled boxes; some chairs of cherry wood, covered with yellow Utrecht velvet; a mahogany clock; a yellow, moist, and slippery floor; a ceiling filled with cracks, and ornamented with garlands of spider-webs; such was the sanctum sanctorum of Jacques Ferrand.

The viscount had not advanced two steps, had not said a single word, before the notary, who knew him by reputation, hated him already. In the first place, he saw in him, so to speak, a rival in knavery; and, although Ferrand was of a mean and ignoble appearance himself, he did not the less detest in others elegance, grace, and youth; above all, when an air deeply insolent accompanied these advantages.

The notary ordinarily affected a sort of rudeness, almost gross, towards his clients, who only felt more esteem for him for these boorish manners. He promised himself to redouble this brutality towards the viscount.

He, knowing M. Ferrand only by reputation, expected to find in him a kind of scrivener, good-natured or ridiculous, the viscount figuring to himself always that men of proverbial probity must be simpletons. Far from this, the other's looks imposed on the viscount an undefinable feeling, half fear, half hatred, although he had no serious reason to fear or hate him. Thus, in consequence of his resolute character, Saint Rémy increased his insolence and habitual foppery of manner. The notary kept his cap upon his head; the viscount retained his hat, and cried from the door in a loud, sharp voice,

"It is, by Jove! very strange, that you give me the trouble to come here, instead of sending to me for the money for the bills I have endorsed for this Badinot, for which the fellow has sued me. You should not expose me to wait a quarter of an hour in your antechamber; that is not so polite as it might be."

Ferrand, without paying the least attention, finished a calculation he was making, wiped his pen methodically on the sponge which lay near his inkstand, and raised towards the viscount his cold, earthly, flattened face, encumbered with the green spectacles.

It looked like a death's head, whose eyes had been replaced by great, fixed, glassy sockets.

After having looked at him for a moment in silence, he said to the viscount in a rough; short tone, "Where is the money?"

Such coolness exasperated Saint Rémy.

He—he! the idol of the women, the envy of men, the paragon of the best company in Paris, the renowned duellist, not to produce more effect on a miserable notary! It was odious; although he was tête-à-tête with Jacques Ferrand, his self-pride revolted.

"Where are the bills?"

With the end of one of his fingers, hard as iron, and covered with red hair, the notary, without answering, struck on a large portfolio of leather placed near him.

Decided to be equally laconic, although bursting with rage, the viscount took from the pocket of his coat a small book of Russian leather, clasped with golden hasps, drew out forty one-thousand franc notes, and showed them to the notary.

"How much?" asked he.

"Forty thousand francs!"

"Give them to me?"

"Here, and let us finish quickly. sir; do your business, pay yourself, hand me back the papers," said the viscount, throwing the packet impatiently on the table.

The notary took them, arose and examined them near the window, turning them over one by one with an attention so scrupulous and so insulting to Saint Rémy, that he grew pale with rage.

The notary, as if he had suspected the thoughts which agitated the viscount, shook his head, half turned towards him, and said in an undefinable tone, "There are such things as—"

For a moment astonished, Saint Rémy replied, dryly, "What?"

"Counterfeits," answered the notary, continuing to examine those he held closely.

"For what purpose do you make this remark to me, sir?"

Jacques Ferrand stopped a moment, looked steadily at the viscount through his glasses; then, shrugging his shoulders, he turned again to counting and examining the bills.

"By George, Master Notary, you must know, when I ask a question, I am always answered!" cried Saint Rémy, irritated beyond measure at the calmness of Jacques Ferrand.

"*These* are good," said the notary, turning towards his bureau, whence he took a bundle of stamped papers, to which were annexed two bills of exchange; he afterwards placed one of the notes for a thousand francs and three rouleaux of one hundred francs on the back of the papers; then he said to Saint Rémy, pointing with his finger to the money and bills, "There is what is to come to you from the forty thousand francs; my client has ordered me to collect the bill of costs."

The viscount had with great difficulty contained himself while Jacques Ferrand arranged his accounts. Instead of answering him and taking the money, he cried, in a voice trembling with anger, "I ask you, sir, why you said to me, respecting the bank bills that I have just given you, *that there were such things as forged notes.*"

"Why?"

"Yes."

"Because I have sent for you here concerning a forgery." The notary turned his green glasses full on the viscount.

"How does this forgery affect me?"

After a moment's pause, Ferrand said, with a severe tone, "Are you acquainted, sir, with the duties of a notary?"

"The duties are perfectly clear to me, sir. I had just now forty thousand francs; I have now remaining but thirteen hundred."

"You are very jocose, sir. I will tell you, that a notary is to temporal affairs what a confessor is to spiritual ones; from his profession he often knows ignoble secrets."

"What next, sir?"

"He is often obliged to be in relations with rogues."

"What after this, sir?"

"He ought, as much as is in his power, to prevent an honourable name from being dragged in the mire."

"What have I in common with all this?"

"Your father has left you a respected name, which you dishonour, sir!"

"What do you dare to say?"

"But for the interest that this name inspires to all honest people, instead of being cited here before me, you would have been at this moment before the police."

"I do not comprehend you."

"About two months since, you discounted, through the agency of a broker, a bill for fifty-eight thousand francs, drawn by the house of Meulaert and Co., of Hamburgh, in favour of one William Smith, and payable in three months, at Grimaldi's, banker, in Paris."

"Well!"

"That bill is a forgery."

"That is not true."

"This bill is a forgery! the house of Meulaert has never contracted any engagement with William Smith; they do not know him."

"Can it be true!" cried Saint Rémy, with as much surprise as indignation; "but then I have been horribly deceived, sir, for I received this bill as ready money."

"From whom?"

"From William Smith himself; the house of Meulaert is so well known, I knew so well myself the probity of Smith, that I accepted this bill in payment of a debt he owed me."

"William Smith has never existed; it is an imaginary person."

"Sir, you insult me!"

"His signature is as false as the others."

"I tell you, sir, that William Smith does exist; but I have, without doubt, been the dupe of a horrible breach of confidence."

"Poor young man!"

"Explain yourself!" cried Saint Rémy, whose anxiety and humiliation were increased by this ironical pity.

"In a word, the actual holder of the bill is convinced that you have committed the forgery."

"Sir!"

"He pretends to have the proof; two days ago he came to me to beg me to send for you here, and to propose to return you this forged note, under an arrangement. So far, all was right; this is not; and I only tell you for information. He asks one hundred thousand francs. To-day even, or to-morrow at noon, the forgery will be made known to the public prosecutor."

"This is indignity!"

"And what is more, absurdity. You are ruined. You were prosecuted for a sum that you have just paid me, from some resource I do not know of: this is what I told to this third party. He answered, 'That a certain great lady, who is very rich, would not leave you in this embarrassment.'"

"Enough, sir, enough!"

"Another indignity! another absurdity! we agree."

"In short, sir, what do they want?"

"Unworthily to take advantage of an unworthy action. I have consented to make this proposition known to you, in branding it as an honest man ought to brand it. Now it is your affair. If you are guilty, choose between the court of assize or the terms proposed. My part is altogether professional. I will have nothing more to do with so dirty a business. The third party's name is M. Petit Jean, oil merchant; he lives on the banks of the Seine, 'No. 10, Quai de Billy.' Settle with him. You are worthy of each other, if you are a forger, as he affirms."

Saint Rémy had entered the notary's with an insolent voice and lofty head. Although he had committed in his life some disgraceful actions, there remained in him still a certain pride of lineage—a natural courage which had never failed him; at the commencement of this conversation, regarding the notary as an adversary quite unworthy of him, he treated him with contempt.

When Jacques Ferrand spoke of forgery, the viscount felt himself crushed. He found the notary had the advantage in his turn. Except for his great self-command, he could not have concealed the great impression made upon him by this unexpected accusation; for the consequences might be most fatal to him, of which even the notary had no idea.

After a moment's reflection and silence, he determined—though so proud, so irritable, so vain of his bravery—to throw himself on the mercy of this vulgar man, who had so roughly spoken the austere language of probity.

"Sir, you give me a proof of interest for which I thank you; I regret the harshness of my opening words," said Saint Rémy, in a cordial manner.

"I do not interest myself in you at all," answered the notary, brutally. "Your father was honour itself; I did not wish to see his name in the court of assizes, that's all."

"I repeat to you, sir, that I am incapable of the infamy of which I am accused."

"You can tell that to M. Petit Jean."

"But I avow that the absence of Mr. Smith, who has so unworthily taken advantage of my good faith"—

"Infamous Smith!"

"The absence of Mr. Smith places me in a cruel position; I am innocent; let them accuse me, I will prove it; but such an accusation always injures a gallant man."

"What next?"

"Be generous enough to use the sum I have just paid you to quiet, in part, this third person."

"This money belongs to my client—it is sacred."

"But in two or three days I will repay you."

"You cannot do it."

"I have resources."

"None available, at least. Your furniture, your horses, no longer belong to you, as you may say; which to me has the appearance of fraud."

"You are very hard, sir. But admitting this, will I not turn everything into money, in a situation so desperate? Only as it is impossible for me to procure between this and to-morrow one hundred thousand francs, I conjure you, employ this money to withdraw this unhappy draught. Or you, who are so rich, make me an advance; do not leave me in such a position."

"I make myself responsible for a hundred thousand francs for you! Really, are you a fool?"

"Sir, I supplicate you, in the name of my father, of whom you have spoken, be so kind as to"—

"I am kind for those who deserve it," said the notary, rudely; "an honest man; I hate sharpers; and I should not be sorry to see one of you fine gentlemen, who are without law or gospel, impious and debauched, some fine day, standing in the pillory as an example for others. But, I hear, your horses are very restless, sir viscount," said the notary, smiling, and showing his black teeth.

At this moment some one knocked at the door. "Who is it?" asked Jacques Ferrand.

"Her ladyship the Comtesse d'Orbigny," said the clerk.

"Beg her to wait a moment."

"It is the step-mother of the Marquise d'Harville," cried Saint Rémy.

"Yes, sir. She has an appointment with me; so, good morning."

"Not a word of this, sir," said Saint Rémy, in a threatening tone.

"I have told you, sir, that a notary was as discreet as a confessor."

Jacques Ferrand rang the bell, and the clerk appeared.

"Show in her ladyship." Then, addressing the viscount, he added, "Take these thirteen hundred francs, sir; it will be so much on account with M. Petit Jean."

Lady d'Orbigny (formerly Madam Roland) entered as the viscount went out, his features contracted with rage for having uselessly humiliated himself before the notary.

"Oh, good morning, Saint Rémy!" said the countess; "it is a long time since I have seen you."

"Yes, madam; since the marriage of D'Harville, of which I was a witness, I have not had the honour to meet you," said Saint Rémy, bowing, and suddenly assuming a most smiling and affable expression. "Since then, you have always remained in Normandy?"

"Dear me! yes. M. d'Orbigny cannot live now but in the country; and where he lives, I live. Thus you see in me a true 'county lady.' I have not been to Paris since the marriage of my dear step-daughter with excellent d'Harville. Do you see him often?"

"D'Harville has become very savage and very morose. I meet him very seldom in society," said Saint Rémy, with a shade of impatience; for this conversation was insupportable, both from its inopportuneness, and because the notary seemed to be much amused. But the step-mother of Madam d'Harville, enchanted at this meeting with a beau of society, was not the woman to let her prey escape so easily.

"And my dear step-daughter," continued she, "is not, I hope, as savage as her husband?"

"Madam d'Harville is very fashionable, and always much sought after, as a pretty woman should be; but I fear, madam, I trespass on your time, and"—

"Not at all, I assure you. I am quite fortunate to meet the 'mould of form, the glass of fashion;' in ten minutes I shall know all about Paris, as if I had never left it. And your dear friend, De Lucenay, who was with you a witness of d'Harville's marriage?"

"More of an original than ever; he set out for the East, and he returned just in time to receive yesterday morning a thrust from a sword; of no great harm, however."

"The poor duke! and his wife, still beautiful and ravishing?"

"You know, madam, that I have the honour to be one of her best friends; my testimony on this subject would be suspected. Will you, madame, on your return to Aubiers, do me the honour to remember me to M. d'Orbigny?"

"He will be very sensible of your kind recollections, I assure you, for he often asks after you and your success. He says you remind him of the Duke de Lauzun."

"This comparison alone is quite a eulogium; but, unfortunately for me it is much more kind than true. Adieu, madame; for I dare not hope that you will do me the honour to receive me before your departure."

"I should be distressed if you should take the trouble to call upon me. I am for a few days at furnished lodgings; but if, this summer or fall, you pass our way to some of the fashionable country-seats, grant us a few days only by way of contrast, and to rest yourself with some poor country-folks from the giddy round of the chateau life, so elegant and so extravagant; for it is always holidays where you go."

"Madam"—

"I need not tell you how happy D'Orbigny and myself would be to receive you; but adieu, sir: I fear that the benevolent humourist," pointing to the notary, "will become tired of our talk."

"Just the contrary, madam, just the contrary," said Ferrand, in an accent which redoubled the restrained rage of the viscount.

"Acknowledge that M. Ferrand is a terrible man," continued Madam d'Orbigny; "but take care, since he is, fortunately for you, charged with your affairs, he will scold you furiously; he is without pity. But what do I say? A man like you to have M. Ferrand for notary—it is a sign of amendment; for every one knows he never lets his client commit any follies without informing them of it. Oh! he does not wish to be the notary of every one." Then, addressing Jacques Ferrand, she said, "Do you know, Mr. Puritan, that this is a superb conversion you have made here—to render wise and prudent the king of fashion!"

"It is exactly a conversion, madam; M. le Vicomte leaves my cabinet altogether different from what he entered it."

"When I say you perform miracles, it is not astonishing you are a saint."

"Oh, madam, you flatter me," said Jacques Ferrand.

Saint Rémy profoundly saluted Madam d'Orbigny; and at the moment of leaving the notary, wishing to try a last effort to soften him, he said in a careless manner, which nevertheless disclosed profound anxiety.

"Decidedly, my dear M. Ferrand, you will not grant me what I ask?"

"Some folly, without doubt! be inexorable, my dear Puritan," cried Madam d'Orbigny, laughing.

"You hear, sir, I cannot act contrary to the advice of so handsome a lady."

"My dear M. Ferrand, let us speak seriously of serious things, and you know that this is so. You refuse decidedly?" asked the viscount, with anguish he could not conceal

The notary was cruel enough to appear to hesitate; Saint Rémy had a moment of hope.

"How, man of iron, you relent?" said the stepmother of Madam d'Harville, laughing: "you submit also to the charms of the irresistible?"

"Faith, madam, I was on the point of yielding, as you say, but you make me blush for my weakness," said Ferrand; then turning to the viscount, with an expression of which he comprehended all the signification, he continued: "There, seriously, it is impossible; I will not suffer that, through caprice, you should commit such an absurdity. M. le Vicomte, I regard myself as the mentor of my clients; I have no other family, and I should regard myself as an accomplice of any errors I should allow them to commit."

"Oh! the Puritan, the Puritan!" cried Madam d'Orbigny.

"Yet, see M. Petit Jean; he will think, I am sure, as I do; and, like me, he will refuse."

Saint Rémy left in a state of desperation. After a moment's thought, he said, "It must be!" Then addressing his footman, who held open the door of the carriage, "To Lucenay House." While Saint Rémy is on his way to the duchess, we will be present with the reader at the interview between Ferrand and the stepmother of Madam d'Harville.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WILL.

MADAM D'ORBIGNY was a slender blonde, with eyebrows nearly white, and pale blue eyes almost round; her speech honeyed, her look hypocritical, her manners insinuating and insidious. "What a charming young man is the Viscount de Saint Rémy!" said she to Jacques Ferrand, when the viscount had gone.

"Charming; but, madam, let us talk of business. You wrote me from Normandy that you wished to consult me on some grave affairs?"

"Have you not always been my adviser since good Dr. Polidori referred me to you? Apropos, have you heard from him?" asked Madam d'Orbigny in a careless manner.

"Since his departure from Paris he has not written me once," answered the notary no less indifferently. We must inform the reader that these two personages lied most boldly to each other. The notary had seen Polidori recently (one of his two accomplices), and had proposed to him to go to Asnières, to the Martials', the fresh-water pirates (of whom we shall speak presently), under the name of Dr. Vincent, to poison Louise Morel. The stepmother of Madam d'Harville came to Paris expressly to have conference with this scoundrel, who now went by the name of Cæsar Bradamante.

"But it is not concerning the good doctor," said Madam d'Orbigny; "you see me much troubled; my husband is sick—he grows worse daily. Without causing me serious fears, his condition troubles me, or rather, troubles him," continued she, wiping her tearless eyes.

"What is the matter?"

"He continually speaks of his final arrangements—of his will." Here Madam d'Orbigny hid her face in her handkerchief for some moments.

"That is sad, doubtless," said the notary; "but this precaution is not alarming. What are his intentions, madam?"

"How can I tell? You know well when he touches on this subject I change it."

"But has he said nothing positive?"

"I believe," said Madam d'Orbigny, in a most disinterested manner, "I believe he wishes not only to give me all the law allows—but—oh! hold, I beg you, let us not speak of this!"

"What shall we speak of?"

"Alas! you are right, relentless man; we must return to the sad subject which brought me here. Well, d'Orbigny carries his kindness so far as to wish to convert a part of his fortune and give me a considerable sum."

"But his daughter—his daughter?" cried Ferrand, with severity. "I ought to tell you that, for a year past, M. d'Harville has given me charge of his affairs. I have lately bought for him a magnificent property. You know my roughness in business. It imports little to me that M. d'Harville is my client; that which I plead is the cause of justice. If your husband takes towards his daughter, Madam d'Harville, a determination which seems to me not proper, I tell you plainly he must not count on me. Straightforward! such has always been my line of conduct."

"And mine also. Thus I repeat to my husband always, just as you have said: 'Your daughter has treated you badly; so be it; but that is no reason to disinherit her.'"

"Very well—all right; and what did he answer?"

"He answered, 'I will leave my daughter twenty-five thousand francs a-year. She had more than a million from her mother; her husband has an enormous income. Can I not leave the rest to you, my tender friend, the sole support, the sole consolation of my old age, my guardian angel!' I repeat these too flattering words," said Madam d'Orbigny, with a modest sigh, "to show you his goodness towards me; yet I have always refused his offers; seeing which, he decided to beg me to come and find you."

"But I do not know M. d'Orbigny."

"But he, like everyone else, knows your probity."

"But how did he address you to me?"

"To silence my scruples. He said, 'I do not ask you to consult my notary, you will think him too much under my orders; but I will leave it to the decision of a man whose honesty is proverbial, M. Ferrand. If he finds your delicacy compromised by your acceptance of my offer, we will talk no more about it; if not, you acquiesce.' 'I consent,' said I, and in this way you have become our arbitrator. 'If he approves,' added my husband, 'I will send him a power of attorney to realise, in my name, my real estate and bank stock; he will keep this sum on deposit, and, after my death, you will at least have an income worthy of you.'"

Never, perhaps, had Ferrand felt more the value of his spectacles than at this moment. Without them, Madam d'Orbigny would have seen how his eyes sparkled at the word "deposit."

He answered, however, in a morose tone: "This is troublesome; this is for the tenth or twelfth time that I have been chosen an arbiter, always under pretext of my probity; that is the only word in their mouths—my probity! my probity! Great advantage; it only gives me trouble and"—

"My good M. Ferrand, come, don't scold; you will write to M. d'Orbigny; he awaits your letter, to send you his full power to realise the sum."

"How much is it?"

"He said, I believe, that it was about four or five hundred thousand francs."

"The amount is not so large as I thought. After all, you have devoted yourself to M. d'Orbigny. His daughter is very rich—you have nothing; I can approve of this. It appears to me, you might accept."

"Really, you think so?" said Madam d'Orbigny; dupe, like everyone else, of the proverbial honesty of the notary, and not undeceived in this respect by Polidori.

"You may accept," said he.

"I shall accept, then," said Madam d'Orbigny, with a sigh.

The clerk knocked at the door. "Who is it?" demanded Ferrand.

"Her ladyship, the Countess M'Gregor."

"Let her wait a moment."

"I leave you, then, my dear M. Ferrand," said Madam d'Orbigny; "you will write to my husband, since he desires it, and he will send you full powers to-morrow."

"I will write."

"Adieu, my worthy and good counsellor."

"Ah! you people of the world do not know how disagreeable it is to take charge of such deposits—the responsibility which bears on us. I tell you, there is nothing more detestable than this fine reputation for probity, which brings one nothing but drudgery."

"And the admiration of good people."

"Praise the Lord! I place otherwise than here below, the recompense I seek for," said Ferrand, in a sanctified tone.

To Madam d'Orbigny succeeded Countess Sarah M'Gregor.

Sarah entered the cabinet of the notary with her habitual coolness and assurance, Jacques Ferrand did not know her; he was ignorant of the object of her visit. He observed her very closely, in the hope to make a new dupe; and, notwithstanding the impassibility of the marble face, he remarked a slight tremor, which appeared to him to betray concealed embarrassment.

The notary arose from his chair, and handed a seat to the countess, saying, "You asked for a meeting, madam, yesterday. I was so much occupied that I could not send you an answer until this morning; I make you a thousand excuses."

"I desired to see you, sir, on business of the greatest importance. Your reputation has made me hope my business with you will be successful."

The notary bowed in his chair. "I know, sir, that your discretion is well tried."

"It is my duty, madam."

"You are, sir, a rigid and incorruptible man."

"Granted, madam."

"Yet, if one should say to you, sir, it depends on you to restore life—more than life—reason to an unhappy mother, would you have the courage to refuse?"

"State facts, madam, I will answer."

"About fourteen years since, in December, 1824, a young man, dressed in mourning, came to propose to you to take, for an annuity, the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand francs, for a child of three years, whose parents desired to remain unknown."

"Continue, madam," said the notary, avoiding a direct answer.

"You consented to receive this amount, and to assure the child an income of eight thousand francs. The one half of this amount was to be added to the capital until its majority; the other half was to be paid by you to the person who should take charge of this little girl."

"Continue, madam."

"At the end of two years," said Sarah, without being able to conquer a slight emotion, "the 28th November, 1827, this child died."

"Before continuing this conversation, madam, I shall ask you what interest you have in this affair?"

"The mother of this little girl is my *sister*, sir; I have here, for proof of what I advance, the publication of the death of this poor little thing, the letters from the person who had care of her, the receipt of one of your clients, with whom you placed the fifty thousand crowns."

"Let me see these papers, madam."

Quite astonished not to be believed at her word, Sarah drew from a portfolio several papers, which the notary closely examined.

"Ah, well! Madam, what do you want? The notice of the death is quite correct; the fifty thousand crowns became the property of M. Petit Jean, my client, by the death of the child; as to the interests, they were always punctually paid by me until its decease."

"Nothing can be more correct than your conduct in this affair; sir, I am pleased to acknowledge it. The woman to whom the child was confided has also a right to our gratitude; she has taken the greatest care of my poor little niece."

"That is true, madam; I was so much pleased with her conduct, that, after the death of the child, I took her in my service; she is still there."

"Mrs. Seraphin is in your service, sir?"

"For fourteen years, as housekeeper."

"Since it is thus, sir, she can be of great assistance, if you will grant a demand which will appear strange, perhaps, even culpable at first; but, when you shall know with what intention"—

"A culpable demand, madam; I do not think you are any more capable of making than I am of hearing it."

"I know, sir, that you are the last person to whom one should address such a request; but I place all my hopes—my sole hope—in your pity. In every case I rely on your discretion."

"Yes, madam."

"I continue, then. The death of this poor little girl has cast her mother into such a state, her grief is as poignant at the present day as it was fourteen years since; and, after having feared for her life, to-day we fear for her reason."

"Poor mother!" said Ferrand, with a sigh.

"Oh! yes, very unfortunate mother, sir; for she could only blush at the birth of her daughter, at the time she lost her; while now circumstances are such, that my sister, if her child still lived, could own her, be proud of her, never leave her. Thus, this incessant regret, joined to other griefs, makes us fear for her reason."

"Unfortunately, nothing can be done for her."

"Oh, yes."

"How, madam?"

"Suppose some one should come and say to the poor mother, 'Your child was supposed to be dead; she is not; the woman who had care of her infancy can affirm it.'"

"Such a falsehood would be cruel, madam. Why cause vain hopes to this poor mother?"

"But if this was not a falsehood, sir; or, rather, if this supposition could be realised?"

"By a miracle! If it only needed to obtain it, my prayers joined to yours, I would pray from the bottom of my heart. Alas! there can be no doubt of her death."

"I know it, alas! sir, the child is dead; and yet, if you wish it, the evil is not irreparable."

"It is an enigma, madam."

"I will speak, then, more plainly. If my sister finds to-morrow her child, not only will she be restored to health, but, what is more, she is sure to marry the father of this child, now, as free as she is. My niece died at six years. Separated from her parents at this tender age, they have no recollection of her. Suppose that a young girl of seventeen could be found; that my sister should be told, 'Here is your child; you have been deceived; certain interests required that she should be thought dead. The woman who had charge of her, a respectable notary will affirm, will prove to you that it is she'—"

Jacques Ferrand, after having allowed the countess to speak without interrupting her, rose suddenly, and cried, in an indignant manner, "Enough, enough, madam. Oh! this is infamous."

"Sir!"

"To dare to propose to me—to me—to palm off a child—a criminal action! It is the first time in my life that I have received such an outrage, and I have not deserved it—heaven knows"

"But, who is wronged by it? My sister and the person she desires to marry are single; both regret bitterly the child they have lost; to deceive them is to restore to them

happiness—life; it is to assure some forsaken young girl a most happy lot: thus it is a noble, generous action, and not a crime."

"Truly," cried the notary, with increasing indignation, "I see how the most execrable projects can be coloured with"—

"But, reflect."

"I repeat to you, madam, that it is infamous. It is a shame to see a woman of your rank contriving such abominations, to which your sister, I hope, is a stranger."

"Sir!"

"Enough, madam, enough! I am not gallant, not I. I tell you the naked truth."

Sarah cast on the notary one of her dark looks, and said, coldly, "You refuse?"

"No new insult, madam!"

"Take care!"

"Threats?"

"Threats! and to prove to you that they will not be in vain, learn, in the first place, that I have no sister."

"What, madam!"

"I am the mother of this child."

"You?"

"I invented this fable to interest you. You are without pity: I raise the mask. You want war! well, war be it."

"War! because I refuse to lend myself to a criminal act? what audacity."

"Listen to me, sir; your reputation as an honest man is great—known far and near."

"Because it is merited. You must have lost your reason before you would have dared to make such a proposition!"

"Better than any one, I know, sir, how much one ought to suspect these reputations of such strict virtue, which often conceal the gallantries of women and the scoundrelism of men."

"You dare to say this, madam?"

"Since the commencement of our conversation, I do not know wherefore, I doubted that you deserve the consideration and esteem which you enjoy."

"Truly, madam, this doubt does honour to your perspicacity."

"Does it not so? for this doubt is founded on nothing—on mere instinct—on inexplicable presentiments; but rarely has this boding deceived me."

"Let us finish this conversation, madam."

"Before we do so, know my determination. I begin by telling you, that I am convinced of the death of my poor child; but, no matter, I will pretend she is not dead; the most unlikely events are often brought about. You are at this moment in such a position that you must have many envious rivals; they will regard it as a piece of good fortune to attack you. I will furnish means to them."

"You!"

"I, in attacking you under an absurd pretext, on an irregularity in the registry of death, let us say—no matter, I will maintain my child is not dead. As I have the greatest interest in having it believed that she still lives, although lost, this process will serve me in giving much notoriety to this affair; a mother who reclaims her child is always interesting; I shall have on my side those who are envious of you, your enemies, and all those who are feeling and romantic."

"This is as foolish as wicked. Why should I? For what interest should I say your child is dead, if she were not?"

"That is true, the motive is sufficiently embarrassing to find. Happily, lawyers are plenty. But a thought! ah! an excellent one; wishing to divide with your client the sum paid for the annuity, you have caused the child to be carried off."

The notary, without moving a muscle of his face, shrugged his shoulders. "If I had been criminal enough to do that, instead of sending her off, I would have killed her!"

Sarah shuddered with surprise, remained silent for a moment, then resumed with bitterness: "For a holy man, that is a thought of crime profoundly deep! Have I touched to the quick in shooting at random? This sets me thinking. One last word: you see what kind of a woman I am—I crush without pity all who cross my path. Reflect well; to-morrow you must decide; you can do with impunity what you are asked. In his joy, the father of my child would not discuss the probability of such a resurrection, if our falsehoods, which will render him so happy, are adroitly combined. He has, besides, no other proofs of the death of our child, than what I wrote to him fourteen years since; it will be easy for me to persuade him that I deceived him on this subject; for then I had just cause of complaint against him. I will tell him that in my anger I wished to break, in his eyes, the last link which still held us together. You cannot therefore in any way be compromised: affirm only, irreproachable man, affirm that all has been concerted between you and me and Mrs. Seraphin, and you will be believed. As to the money placed with you, that concerns me alone; it shall remain with your client, who must be ignorant of all this; finally, you shall name your own recompense."

Jacques Ferrand preserved all his coolness, notwithstanding his position, so strange and dangerous for him. The countess, believing really in the death of her child, came to ask him to represent as living this child, whom he had himself *passed for dead* fourteen years before. He was too cunning, and knew too well the perils of his situation, not to comprehend the bearing of Sarah's threats. Although admirably constructed, the edifice of the notary's reputation was built on sand. The public as easily detach as they attach themselves, and are pleased with the right to trample under foot those whom they once had exalted to the skies. How foresee the consequences of the first attack on the reputation of Jacques Ferrand? However ri-

diculous this attack might be, its boldness alone might awaken suspicion.

The pertinacity of Sarah, and her obduracy, alarmed the notary. This mother had not shown for a moment any feeling in speaking of her child; she had only seemed to consider her death as the loss of a means of action. Such dispositions are implacable in their objects, and in their vengeance. Wishing to give himself time to seek some means to avoid the dangerous blow, Ferrand said coldly to Sarah, "You have asked until noon to-morrow. It is I, madam, who give you until the next day to renounce a project, of which you know not the gravity. If, meanwhile, I do not receive a letter from you, in which you announce that you have abandoned this foolish and criminal undertaking, you will learn to your cost that justice knows how to protect honest people who refuse to lend themselves to culpable acts."

"That is to say, sir, that you demand one day more to reflect on my propositions? That is a good sign; I grant it to you. The day after to-morrow, at this hour, I will return here, and it shall be between us peace or war; I repeat it to you, a war to the knife, without mercy or pity;" and Sarah disappeared.

"All goes well," said she to herself. "This miserable young girl, for whom Rudolph was so much interested—thanks to old One Eye, who has delivered me from her, is no longer to be feared. The skill of Rudolph has saved Madam d'Harville from the snare I placed for her, but it is impossible she can escape from the new plot I have contrived; she will then be for ever lost to him. Then, sad, discouraged, isolated from all ties, will he not be in such a disposition of mind, that he will not desire anything better than to be the dupe of a falsehood, to which, with the aid of the notary, I can give every appearance of truth? And the notary will assist me, for I have alarmed him. I can easily find a young orphan girl, interesting and poor, who, instructed by me, will fill the part of our child, so bitterly regretted by Rudolph. I know the grandeur and generosity of his heart. Yes, to give a name and rank to her whom he believes to be his daughter, until then unhappy and abandoned, he will renew those ties which I had thought indissoluble. The predictions of my nurse will at length be realised, and I shall have this time surely attained the constant aim of my life—a crown." Hardly had Sarah left the mansion of the notary, than Charles Robert entered it, descending from an elegant cabriolet; he turned towards the private cabinet, as one having free admission.

CHAPTER IX.

CHARLES ROBERT.

THE new comer entered without any ceremony the notary's office, who was in a very thoughtful and splenetic mood, and who said to him very roughly, "I reserve the afternoon for my clients; when you wish to speak to me, come in the morning."

"My dear scribbler" (this was one of the pleasantries of M. Robert), "it is concerning an important affair, in the first place, and then I wish to assure you myself concerning the fears that you might have."

"What fears?"

"Do you not know?"

"What?"

"My duel with the Duke de Lucenay. Are you ignorant of it?"

"Yes."

"Really?"

"Why this duel?"

"Something very serious, which required blood. Just imagine that, in the face of the whole embassy, M. de Lucenay allowed himself to say to me, to my face, that I had a cough, a complaint that must be very ridiculous."

"You fought for this?"

"And what the devil would you have one to fight for? Do you think that one could, in cold blood, hear one's self accused of having a cough? and before a charming woman, too; what is more, before a little marchioness, who, in brief—it could not be overlooked."

"Certainly."

"We soldiers, you understand, we are always on the look-out. My seconds, the day before yesterday, had an interview with those of the duke. I had the question placed very plainly: a duel or a retraction."

"A retraction of what?"

"Of the cough, by Jove, which he allowed himself to attribute to me."

The notary shrugged his shoulders.

"On their side the duke's seconds said, 'We render justice to the honorable character of M. Charles Robert; but his grace of Lucenay cannot, ought not, will not retract.' 'Then, gentlemen,' responded my seconds, 'M. de Lucenay still continues to insist that M. Charles Robert has a cough?' 'Yes, gentlemen; but he does not intend it as an attack upon M. Robert's reputation.' 'Then let him retract.' 'No, gentlemen; M. de Lucenay recognises M. Robert for a gallant man, but he insists that he has a cough.' You see there was no way of arranging so serious an affair."

"None. You were insulted in that which a man holds to be most respectable."

"So they agreed on the day and hour of meeting, and yesterday morning, at Vincennes, all passed in the most honourable manner. I touched the duke slightly in the arm with my sword; the seconds declared my honour sa-

tisfied. Then the duke said, in a loud voice, 'I never retract before an affair; afterward, it is different: it is therefore my duty to proclaim that I falsely accused M. Charles Robert of having a cough. Gentlemen, I confess, not only that my loyal adversary has no cough, but I affirm that he is incapable of ever having it.' Then the duke extended his hand to me cordially, saying, 'Are you content? Henceforth we are friends in life until death.' I answered, that I owed him as much. The duke has done everything that was right. He might have said nothing at all, or contented himself with saying that I had not the cough; but to affirm that I never could have one was a very delicate proceeding on his part."

"This is what I call courage well employed. But what do you want?"

"My dear banker" (another pleasantry of M. Robert), "it concerns something of great importance to me. You know that in our agreement, when I advanced you 350,000 francs, in order that you might finish the purchase of your notariat, it was stipulated that, by giving you three months' notice, I could withdraw from you this amount, for which you now pay interest."

"What next?"

"Well!" said M. Robert, with hesitation "I—no—but"—

"What?"

"You perceive it is pure caprice; an idea to become a landed proprietor, my dear lawwriter."

"Explain yourself; you annoy me."

"In a word, I have been offered a territorial acquisition, and if it is not disagreeable to you, I should wish, that is to say, I should desire to withdraw my funds from you; and I come to give you notice, according to our agreement."

"Humph!"

"It does not make you angry, I hope!"

"Why should it?"

"Because you may think"—

"I may think?"

"That I am the echo of rumours."

"What rumours?"

"No, nothing; absurdities."

"But tell me, then?"

"It is no reason because there *are* reports in circulation about you"—

"About me?"

"There is not a word of truth in it—that you have been doing some bad business; pure scandal, no doubt, like when we speculated on the 'Change together. That report soon fell to the ground; for I wish that you and I might become"—

"Then you think your money is no longer safe with me?"

"Not so; but I prefer to have it in my hands."

"Wait a minute."

Ferrand shut the drawer of his bureau, and arose.

"Where are you going to, my dear banker?"

"To look for something to convince you of the truth of the rumours concerning me," said the notary, ironically. And opening a little private staircase which led to the pavilion, without going through the office, he disappeared.

Hardly had he gone when the clerk knocked at the door.

"Come in," said Charles Robert.

"Is not M. Ferrand here?"

"No, my worthy blue-baggist."

"A veiled lady wishes to speak to master instantly, on very pressing business."

"Worthy fellow, your master will return directly; I will tell him. Is she pretty?"

"One must be a wizard to find this out; she wears a black veil, so thick that her face cannot be seen."

"Good, good! I'll take a look at her when I go out."

The clerk left the room.

"Where the devil is he gone to?" said Charles to himself. "If these reports are absurd, so much the better. Never mind, I prefer to have my money. I will buy the chateau they have spoken to me of, with Gothic towers of the time of Louis XIV., that will give me a noble appearance. It will not be like my affair with this prude of a Madam d'Harville—fine game! Oh, no; I have not made my expenses, as the stupid old portress in the Rue du Temple said, with her fantastic periwig. This pleasantry has cost me at least a thousand crowns. It is true, the furniture remains; and I can compromise the marquise. But here is the scrivener."

Ferrand returned, holding in his hand some papers, which he gave to Robert.

"Here," said he to him, "are three hundred and fifty thousand francs in Treasury notes. In a few days we will regulate the interest. Write me a receipt."

"Eh!" cried Charles, stupified. "Oh! now don't think, at least, that I"—

"I think nothing."

"But"—

"This receipt!"

"Dear sir."

"Write; and tell the people who speak to you of my embarrassments, how I answer such suspicions."

"The fact is, as soon as this is known, your credit will only be the more solid. But, really, take the money; I cannot use it now; I said in three months."

"M. Charles Robert, no one shall suspect me twice."

"You are angry?"

"The receipt."

"Oh, obstinacy!" said Charles Robert; then he added, writing the receipt, "There is a lady closely veiled, who wishes to speak to you on some very pressing business. I shall take a good look at her when I pass. Here is your receipt; is it right?"

"Very well; now go away by the little staircase."

"But the lady?"

"It is just to prevent your seeing her."

The notary rung for the clerk, saying to him, "Show the lady in. Adieu, M. Robert."

"Well. I must renounce seeing her. No ill-feeling, eh! scrivener?"

"Believe as much."

"Well, well! adieu."

The notary shut the door on Charles Robert.

After a few moments the clerk introduced the Duchess de Lucenay, very modestly dressed, wrapped in a large shawl, her face completely concealed by a thick veil of black lace, which covered her moire hat of the same colour.

CHAPTER X.

THE DUCHESS DE LUCENAY.

MADAM DE LUCENAY slowly approached the desk, in an agitated manner; he advanced to meet her.

"Who are you, madam, and what do you want with me?" said the notary, roughly, whose temper, already fretted by the threat of Sarah, was exasperated at the suspicions of Robert. Besides, the duchess was so modestly dressed, that the notary saw no reason why he should be civil to her. As she hesitated to speak, he said, even more harshly, "Will you explain yourself, madam?"

"Sir," said she, in a trembling voice, trying to conceal her face under the folds of her veil, "Sir, can one confide a secret to you of the highest importance?"

"Anything can be confided to me, madam, but I must see and know to whom I speak."

"That, perhaps, is not necessary. I know that you are honour and loyalty itself."

"Just so, madam, just so; there is some one there waiting. Who are you?"

"My name is of no importance, sir. One of my friends—of my relations—has just left you."

"His name?"

"M. Floreston de Saint Rémy."

"Ah!" said the notary, casting on the duchess an inquisitive and searching glance; then he resumed; "Well, madam!"

"M. de Saint Rémy has told me everything, sir."

"What did he tell you?"

"All!"

"But what did he say?"

"You know well."

"I know many things about M. de Saint Rémy."

"Alas! sir, a terrible thing."

"I know a great many terrible things about M. de Saint Rémy."

"Ah! sir, he told me truly. You are without pity."

"For cheats and forgers like him, yes, I am without pity. Is Saint Rémy your relation? Instead of confessing it, you ought to blush. Do you come here to weep, to soften me? It is useless; without saying that you are performing a wretched part for an honest woman, if you are one."

This brutal insolence was revolting to the pride and patrician blood of the duchess. She drew herself up, threw her veil back, and with a proud look, and a firm, imperious voice, she said, "Sir, I am the Duchess of Lucenay."

This woman assumed so haughty an air, her appearance became so imposing, that the notary, overcome, charmed, fell back astonished; took off, mechanically, his black silk cap, and saluted her profoundly.

Nothing could be, indeed, more graceful and more majestic than the face and bearing of Madam de Lucenay; yet she was then over thirty years of age, with a pale face, appearing slightly fatigued; but she had large sparkling brown eyes, splendid black hair, a fine arched nose, a proud and ruby lip, dazzling complexion, very white teeth, tall and slender figure, a form like a "goddess on the clouds," as the immortal St. Simon says.

She had entered the notary's as a timid woman; all at once she showed herself a grand, proud, and irritated lady. Never had Jacques Ferrand in his life met with a woman of so much insolent beauty, at once so bold and so noble. Although old, ugly, mean, and sordid, Jacques Ferrand was as capable as anyone else of appreciating the style of beauty of Madam de Lucenay. His hatred and his rage against Saint Rémy augmented with his admiration of the charming duchess. He thought to himself that this gentleman forger, who had almost kneeled before him, inspired such love in this grand lady, that she risked a step which might ruin her. At these thoughts the notary felt his audacity, which for a moment was paralysed, restored. Hatred, envy, a kind of burning, savage resentment kindled in his looks, on his forehead, and his cheeks—the most shameful and wicked passions. Seeing Madam de Lucenay on the point of commencing a conversation so delicate, he expected on her part some turnings, expedients. What was his surprise! She spoke to him with as much assurance and pride as if it was concerning the most natural thing in the world, and as if before a man of his species, she had no thought of the reserve and fitness which she had certainly shown to her equals. In fact, the gross insolence of the notary, in wounding her to the quick, had forced Madam de Lucenay to quit the humble and imploring part that she had at first assumed with much trouble; returned to her own dignity, she believed it to be beneath her to descend to the least concealment with this scribbler of deeds.

"Sir notary," said the duchess, resolutely, to Jacques Ferrand, "M. de Saint Rémy is one of my friends; he has confided to me the embarrassing situation in which he finds himself, from the inconvenience of a double piece of villany, of which he is the victim. Everything can be managed with money. How much is necessary to terminate these miserable, shuffling tricks?"

Jacques Ferrand was completely astounded with this cavalier and deliberate manner of opening the business.

"They ask a hundred thousand francs," answered he, as soon as he had recovered from his astonishment.

"You shall have your hundred thousand francs; and you will send at once the bad papers to M. de Saint Rémy."

"Where are the hundred thousand francs, your grace?"

"Did I not tell you that you should have them, sir?"

"They must be had to-morrow, before noon, madam; otherwise a complaint of forgery will be made."

"Well, give this amount; I will be accountable for it; as for you, I will pay you well."

"But, madam, it is impossible."

"You will not tell me, I hope, that a notary like you cannot procure a hundred thousand francs any day?"

"On what security, madam?"

"What does that mean? Explain yourself."

"Who is to be answerable for this amount?"

"I."

"But, madam"—

"Is it necessary for me to tell you, that I have a property yielding eighty thousand livres rent, at four leagues from Paris? That will suffice, I believe, for that which you call guarantee?"

"Yes, madam, by means of a mortgage."

"What does that mean again? Some formality doubtless. Make it, sir, make it."

"Such a deed cannot be drawn up under two weeks, and it needs the consent of your husband, madam."

"But this is my property, mine—mine alone," said the duchess, impatiently.

"No matter, madam; you are in the power of your husband, and a deed of mortgage is very long and very minute."

"But once more, sir, you cannot make me believe that it is so difficult to procure one hundred thousand francs in two hours."

"Then, madam, apply to your own notary, to your steward; with me, it is impossible."

"I have reasons, sir, to keep this a secret," said Madam de Lucenay, heartily. "You know the rogues who wish to rob M. de Saint Rémy; it is on this account I address myself to you."

"Your confidence infinitely honours me, madam; but I cannot do what you ask."

"You have not this amount?"

"I have much more than this sum in bank bills, or in gold—here—here, in my safe."

"Oh, what a waste of words! Is it my signature you wish? I give it you; let us finish."

"In admitting, madam, that you are the Duchess of Lucenay."

"Come in an hour's time to the Hotel de Lucenay, sir; I will sign at home what is necessary to be signed."

"Will his grace sign also?"

"I do not understand you, sir."

"Your signature alone is of no value to me, madam."

Jacques Ferrand enjoyed with cruel delight the impatience of the duchess, who, under this appearance of *sangfroid* and disdain, concealed the most painful anguish. She was for a moment at the end of her resources. The evening previous, her jeweller had advanced her a considerable sum on her diamonds, some of which were confided to Morel, the artisan. This sum had served to pay the bills of Saint Rémy, and disarm other creditors; Dubreuil, the farmer at Arnouville, was more than a year in advance, and besides, time was wanting; unfortunately for Madame de Lucenay, two of her friends, to whom she could have had recourse in an extreme situation, were then absent from Paris. In her eyes, the viscount was innocent; he had told her, and she believed it, that he was the dupe of two rogues; but her situation was none the less terrible. He accused, he dragged to prison! Then, even if he should take to flight, would his name be any less dishonoured by such a suspicion?

"Since you possess the sum I ask for, sir, and my guarantee is sufficient, why do you refuse me?"

"Because men have their caprices as well as women, madam."

"But what is this caprice, which makes you act thus against your interest? for, I repeat to you, make your conditions; whatever they may be, I accept them!"

"Your grace will accept all the conditions?" said the notary, with a singular expression.

"All! two, three, four thousand francs—more, if you will; for I tell you," added the duchess, frankly, in a tone almost affectionate, "I have no resource but in you, sir—in you alone. It will be impossible for me to find elsewhere that which I ask you for to-morrow; and it must be—you understand—it must be absolutely. Thus, I repeat to you, whatever condition you impose on me for this service, I accept."

In his blindness, he had interpreted in an unworthy manner the last words of the duchess. It was an idea as stupid as it was infamous; but we have already said that sometimes Jacques Ferrand became a tiger or a wolf; then the beast overpowered the man. He arose quickly, and advanced towards the duchess. She, thunderstruck, rose

at the same moment, and regarded him with astonishment.

"You will not regard the cost?" cried he in a broken voice, approaching still nearer to the duchess. "Well, this sum I will lend to you on one condition, one single condition—and I swear that"— He could not finish his declaration.

By one of those strange contradictions of human nature, at the sight of the hideous face of M. Ferrand, at the mere thought of what his conditions might be, Madame de Lucenay, notwithstanding her inquietudes and troubles, burst out in a laugh so frank, so loud, so mirthful, that the notary recoiled confounded.

Without giving him time to utter a word, the duchess, abandoning herself more and more to her hilarity, pulled down her veil, and, between two renewed bursts of laughter, said to the notary, who was almost blind with rage, hatred, and fury, "I prefer, upon the whole, to ask this favour openly of the duke." She then went out, continuing to laugh so loudly that, though the door of the cabinet was closed, the notary could still hear her.

Jacques Ferrand returned to his senses only to curse his imprudence bitterly. Yes, by degrees he reassured himself in thinking that the duchess could not speak of this interview without gravely compromising herself.

Nevertheless, it was a bad day for him. He was buried in the blackest thoughts, when the private door of his cabinet was opened, and Mrs. Seraphin entered wildly.

"Oh, Ferrand!" cried she, clasping her hands, "you were right enough in saying that we should some day regret having spared her life!"

"Whose?"

"That cursed little girl's."

"How?"

"A one-eyed woman, whom I did not know, to whom Tournemine delivered the little girl to rid us of her, fourteen years ago, when we said she was dead. Oh, who would have thought it!"

"Speak!"

"This woman has just been here; she was below just now. She told me she knew it was I who gave up the child."

"Malediction! who could have told her? Tournemine is at the galleys."

"I denied everything, treating her as a liar. But she maintains that she has found this child again, now grown up; that she knows where she is, and that it only depends upon herself to discover everything."

"Is hell unchained against me to-day?" cried the notary, in a fit of rage that rendered him hideous.

"What shall be said to the woman? What must we promise to keep her silent?"

"Does she look as if she were poor?"

"As I treated her like a beggar, she shook her reticule—there was money in it."

"And she knows where this young girl is now?"

"She declares she knows."

"And she is the daughter of Countess M'Gregor!" said the notary to himself, "who just now offered me so much to say that her child was not dead! And the child lives. I can restore her to her! Yes; but this false certificate of death—if any inquiry is made, I am lost! This crime may put them on the scent of others." After a moment's thought, he said to Madam Seraphin, "This one-eyed woman knows where the girl is?"

"Yes."

"And this woman will return to-morrow?"

"To-morrow."

"Write to Polidori to be here to-night at nine o'clock."

"Do you mean to get rid of the girl and the old woman? It will be too much for one time, Ferrand!"

"I tell you to write to Polidori to be here to-night by nine o'clock."

* * * *

At the close of this day, Rudolph said to Murphy, who had not been able to see the notary, "Let M. de Graun send a courier off at once. Cecily must be in Paris in six days."

"Once more that infernal she-devil! the execrable wife of poor David, as handsome as she is infamous! For what good, your highness?"

"For what good, Sir Walter? In a month's time you may ask this question of the notary, Jacques Ferrand."

CHAPTER XI.

DENUNCIATION.

ABOUT ten o'clock in the evening of the day on which Fleur de Marie had been carried off by Screech-Owl and the Schoolmaster, a man on horseback arrived at the farm, coming, as he said, on the part of Rudolph, to reassure Mrs. Georges as to the disappearance of her young *protégée*, who would return to her in a few days. For several very important reasons, added this man, Rudolph begged Mrs. Georges, in the event of her having anything to send him, not to write him at Paris, but to hand the letter to the courier, who would take charge of it.

This courier was an emissary of Sarah's.

By this she tranquilised Mrs. Georges, and retarded thus for some days the moment when Rudolph must hear of the abduction. In this interval, Sarah hoped to force the notary to favour the unworthy scheme of which we have spoken. This was not all. Sarah wished also to get rid of Madam d'Harville, who inspired her with serious fears, and who would have been lost but for Rudolph's rescue.

On the day when the Marquis had followed

his wife to the house in the Rue du Temple, where she was to meet Charles Robert, but where Rudolph led her to the Morels, and thus changed the assignation into a call in charity, Sarah's brother Tom went there, easily set Mrs. Pipelet jabbering, and learned that a young lady, on the point of being surprised by her husband, had been saved, thanks to a lodger in the house named Rudolph. Informed of this circumstance, Sarah, possessing no material proof of the rendezvous that Lady d'Harville had given to Charles Robert, conceived another odious plan. It was concocted to send an anonymous letter to the marquis, in order to effect a complete rupture between him and Rudolph, or, at least, to make the marquis so suspicious as to forbid any farther intercourse between the prince and his wife.

This letter was thus couched:

"You have been deceived most shamefully. The other day, your wife, advised that you were following her, pretended an imaginary visit of charity; she went to meet a very *august personage*, who has hired, in the Rue du Temple, a room in the fourth story, under the name of Rudolph. If you doubt these facts, strange as they may appear, go to the Rue du Temple, No. 17, and inform yourself; paint to yourself the features of the *august person* spoken of, and you will easily acknowledge that you are the most credulous, good-natured husband who has ever been so *sovereignly* deceived. Do not neglect this advice; otherwise it will be supposed that you also are too much

"THE FRIEND OF PRINCES."

This note was put in the post at five o'clock by Sarah, on the day of her interview with the notary. The same evening Rudolph went to pay a visit to a foreign embassy; after which it was his intention to go to Madam d'Harville's, to announce to her that he had found a *charitable intrigue* worthy of her. We will conduct the reader to Madam d'Harville's. It will be seen, from the following conversation, that this young lady, in showing herself generous and compassionate towards her husband, whom she had until then treated with extreme coldness, followed already the noble counsels of Rudolph.

The marquis and his wife had just left the table; the scene passed in the little saloon of which we have spoken; the expression of Clemence d'Harville was affectionate and kind; d'Harville seemed less sad than usual. He had not yet received the new infamous letter from Sarah.

"What are you going to do to-night?" said he, mechanically, to his wife.

"I shall not go out; pray what are your plans?"

"I do not know," answered he, with a sigh. "Society is insupportable to me. I will pass this evening, like so many other evenings, alone."

"Why alone, since I am not going out?"

M. d'Harville looked at his wife with surprise.

"Doubtless, but"—

"Well?"

"I know that you often prefer solitude when you do not go out."

"Yes; but as I am very capricious," said Clemence, smiling, "at present I prefer to partake my solitude with you, if it is agreeable to you."

"Really," cried d'Harville, with emotion, "how kind you are to anticipate what I dared not express!"

"Do you know, dear, that your astonishment has almost an air of reproach?"

"A reproach? Oh, no, no! not after my unjust and cruel suspicions the other day. To find you so forgiving, it is, I confess, a surprise for me; but a surprise the most delightful."

"Let us forget the past," said she to her husband, with an angelic smile.

"Clemence, can you forget?" answered he, sadly. "Have I not dared to suspect you? To tell you to what extremity a blind jealousy has impelled me? But what is all this compared to other wrongs, still greater, more irreparable?"

"Let us forget the past, I say," repeated Clemence, restraining her emotion.

"What do I hear? The past also—can you forget it?"

"I hope to do so."

"Can it be true, Clemence, you can be so generous? But no, no, I cannot believe in so much happiness; I had renounced it for ever."

"You were wrong, you see."

"What a change! Is it a dream? Oh, tell me I am not mistaken!"

"No, no, you are not mistaken."

"And, truly, your look is less cold; your voice almost falters. Oh, say, is it true? Am I not under an illusion?"

"No; for I also have need of pardon."

"You?"

"Have I not been cruel towards you? Ought I not to have thought that you must have needed a rare courage, a virtue more than human, to act differently from what you did? Isolated, unhappy, how resist the desire of seeking some consolations in a marriage which pleased you? Alas! when one suffers, one is so disposed to believe on the generosity of others! Your error has been, until now, to count on mine. Well, henceforth I will try to give you reason."

"Oh, speak, speak once more!" said D'Harville, his hands clasped in a kind of ecstasy.

"Our existence is for ever united. I will do all in my power to render your life less bitter."

"Is it you I hear?"

"I beg you do not be so much astonished: it gives me pain: it is a bitter censure on my past conduct. Who else should pity you?

Who should lend you a friendly and helping hand if not I? A happy inspiration I have received. I have reflected, well reflected, on the past, on the future. I have seen my errors, and I have found, I believe, the means to repair them."

"Your errors, poor wife?"

"Yes; I should have, the next day after our marriage, appealed to your honour, and frankly demanded a separation."

"Ah, Clemence, pity, pity!"

"Otherwise, since I accepted my position, I should have augmented it by submission, instead of causing you constant self-reproach by my haughty and taciturn coldness. I should have endeavoured to console you for a fearful malady, by only remembering your misfortune. By degrees I should have become attached to my work of commiseration, by reason even of the cares, perhaps the sacrifices, which they would have cost me; your gratitude had rewarded me, and then—but what is the matter? You weep!"

"Yes, I weep—weep with joy. You do not know how many new emotions your words cause me. Oh, Clemence, let me weep!"

"Never more than at this moment have I comprehended how culpable I have been in chaining you to my sad destiny!"

"And never have I felt more decided to forget. These gentle tears that you shed make me acquainted with a happiness of which I was ignorant. Courage, dear, courage, in default of a fortunate and smiling destiny, let us seek our satisfaction in the accomplishment of the serious duties that fate imposes. Let us be indulgent to one another; if we falter, let us regard the cradle of our child, let us concentrate on her all our affections, and we shall yet have some joys, melancholy, and holy."

"An angel, she is an angel!" cried d'Harville, joining his hands and looking at his wife with affectionate admiration. "Oh! you do not know the pain and pleasure you cause me, Clemence! you do not know that your harshest words formerly, your most severe reproaches, alas! the most merited, have never so much overwhelmed me as this adorable, generous resignation, and yet, in spite of myself, you make hope spring up again. You do not know the future that I dare imagine."

"And you can have blind and entire faith in what I tell you, Albert. This resolution is taken firmly; it shall never fail, I swear it to you. Before long I may give you new guarantees of my word."

"Guarantees!" cried d'Harville, more and more excited by happiness so unlooked for, "guarantees! have I need of them? Your look, your voice, this beaming expression of goodness which still graces you, the throbbings of my heart, all, all prove to me, that what you say is true? But you know, Clemence, man is insatiable in his hopes," added the marquis. "Your noble and touching words give me courage to hope, yes, to hope what yesterday I regarded as an insensate dream."

"Albert, I swear to you I shall always be the most devoted of friends, the most tender of sisters; but nothing more. Pardon, pardon, if, unknowingly my words have ever given you hopes which can never be realised."

"Never?" cried d'Harville, fixing on her a desperate and supplicating look.

"Never!" answered Clemence.

This single word, the tone of voice, revealed an irrevocable resolution. Clemence, brought back to noble resolutions by the influence of Rudolph, was firmly resolved to surround her husband with the most touching attentions; but she felt that she was incapable of ever loving him. An impression still stronger than fright, contempt, hatred separated Clemence from her husband for ever. It was a repugnance invincible. After a moment of mournful silence, d'Harville passed his hand over his eyes, and said to his wife, bitterly,

"Pardon me for deceiving myself; pardon me for having abandoned myself to a hope, mad as it was foolish. Oh! I am very unfortunate!"

"My friend," said Clemence to him gently, "I do not wish to reproach you; yet do you reckon as nothing my promise to be for you the most tender of sisters? You will owe to the most devoted friendship, attentions that love could not give you. Hope for better days. Until now you have found me almost indifferent to your sorrows; you shall see how I shall compassionate you, and what consolations you will find in my affection."

A servant entered, and said to Clemence. "His Royal Highness the Grand Duke of Gerolstein asks if your ladyship will receive him?"

Clemence looked at her husband, who recovering his coolness, said to her, "Of course."

The servant retired.

"Pardon me, my friend," said Clemence; "I did not say that I would not receive. Besides, it is a long time since you have seen the prince; he will be happy to find you here. I shall, also, be much pleased to see him; yet I avow, that just now I am so agitated that I should have preferred to receive his visit some other day."

"I can comprehend it; but what could we do? Here he is."

At the same moment, Rudolph was announced.

"I am a thousand times happy, madam, to have the honour to meet you," said Rudolph; "and I doubly appreciate my good fortune, since it also procures me the pleasure of seeing you, my dear Albert," added he, turning towards the marquis, whom he cordially shook by the hand.

"It is a long time since I have had the honour to pay your highness my respects."

"And whose fault is it, invisible lord? The last time I came to pay my respects to Madam d'Harville, I asked for you; you were absent. It is now three weeks that you have forgotten me; it is very wrong."

"Be merciless, your highness," said Clemence, smiling; "M. d'Harville is the more guilty since he has for your highness the most profound respect, and he might make that doubted by his negligence."

"Well! see my vanity, madam; whatever d'Harville might do, it would always be impossible for me to doubt his affection; but I ought not to say this. I am encouraging him in such conduct."

"Believe me, your highness, that some unforeseen circumstances alone have prevented me from profiting oftener by your kindness towards me."

"Between ourselves, my dear Albert, I believe you a little too platonic in friendship; very sure that you are loved, you are not pliant enough to give or receive proofs of attachment."

Through a breach of etiquette, which rather annoyed Madam d'Harville, a servant entered, bringing a letter to the marquis. It was the anonymous denunciation of Sarah, which accused the prince of being the lover of Madam d'Harville.

The marquis, out of deference to the prince, pushed back with his hand the silver salver which the servant handed him, and said, in an under tone, "Not now, not now."

"My dear Albert," said the prince, in the most affectionate tone, "do you stand on ceremony with me?"

"But, your highness"—

"With the permission of Madam d'Harville, I beg you to read this letter."

"I assure your highness, that there is nothing pressing."

"Once more, Albert, read this letter!"

"But"—

"I entreat you—I wish it."

"Since your royal highness requires it," said the marquis, taking the letter from the salver.

"Certainly. I require you to treat me as a friend."

Then turning towards the marchioness, while M. d'Harville broke the seal of this fatal letter, the contents of which Rudolph could not have imagined, he added, smiling, "What a triumph for you, madam, to cause this will, so stern, always to yield!"

D'Harville drew near one of the candelabras on the chimney piece, and opened the letter. Rudolph and Clemence conversed together, while d'Harville twice read the letter. His countenance remained composed; a nervous trembling, almost imperceptible, agitated his hands alone; after a moment's hesitation, he put the note into his waistcoat pocket.

"At the risk of passing for a savage," said he to Rudolph, smiling, "I shall ask permission to go and answer this letter—more important than I thought at first."

"Shall I not see you again to-night?"

"I do not think that I can have that honour; I hope your royal highness will excuse me."

"What a man!" said Rudolph gaily "Will you not try to retain him, madam?"

"I dare not attempt what your highness has attempted in vain."

"Seriously, my dear Albert, try to return to us as soon as your letter is written; if not promise to grant me an interview some morning—I have a thousand things to say to you."

"Your royal highness overwhelms me." said the marquis, bowing profoundly as he retired.

"Your husband is preoccupied," said Rudolph to the marchioness, "his smile appeared constrained."

"When your royal highness arrived d'Harville was profoundly affected; he had great trouble to conceal it."

"I have arrived, perhaps, at an inopportune moment."

"No, you have even spared me the conclusion of a painful conversation."

"How is that?"

"I have told d'Harville the new line of conduct that I was resolved to follow, promising him support and consolation."

"How happy he should be!"

"At first he was as much so as myself; for his tears, and joy, produced an emotion to which I had, as yet, been a stranger. Formerly I thought I revenged myself by addressing him a reproach, a sarcasm. Sad revenge! my sorrow afterward has only been more bitter. While just now—what a difference! I asked my husband if he were going out: he answered me sadly, that he should pass the evening alone, as was usually the case. When I offered to remain with him—Oh! if you could have seen his astonishment! how his expression, always sad, became at once radiant. Ah! you were right—nothing is more pleasing than to contrive such surprises of happiness!"

"But how did these proofs of goodness on your part lead to this painful conversation of which you have spoken?"

"Alas!" said Clemence, blushing, "to these hopes succeeded hopes more tender, which I was very guarded not to excite, because it will always be impossible for me to realise them."

"I comprehend: he loves you tenderly."

"As much as I was at first touched with his gratitude, so much was I alarmed at his protestations of love. I could not conceal my alarm. I caused him a sad blow in manifesting thus my invincible repugnance to his love. I regret it. But, at least, d'Harville is now for ever convinced that he has only to expect from me the most devoted friendship."

"I pity him, without being able to blame you; there are susceptibilities, thus to speak, which are sacred. Poor Albert, so good, so kind! If you knew how much I have been afflicted, for a long time past, with his sadness and dejection, although ignorant of the cause. Let us leave all to time, to reason. By degrees he will recognise the value of the affection you offer him, and he will be resigned to it, as he was resigned before having the touching consolations which you offer him."

"And which shall never be wanting, I swear to your highness."

"Now let us think of the other unfortunates. I have promised you a good work, having all the charm of a romance in action. I come to fulfil my engagement."

"Already; what happiness!"

"Ah! it was a kind of happy inspiration that induced me to take that poor room in the house of the Rue du Temple, of which I have spoken to you. You cannot imagine all that I find curious and interesting! In the first place, your protégés of the garret envy the comforts your presence had promised them; they have, however, yet to undergo some sad trials; but I do not wish to make you sad. Some day you shall know how many horrible calamities may overwhelm one single family."

"What must be their gratitude towards you!"

"It is your name they bless."

"Your highness has succoured them in my name."

"To render the charity sweeter to them. Besides, I have only realised your promises."

"Oh! I will go and undeceive them: tell them it is to you they owe"—

"Do not do that! you know I have a room in that house: be guarded against any new cowardly acts of your enemies, or of mine; and since the Morels are now out of the reach of want, think of others. Let us think of our intrigue. It concerns a poor mother and her daughter, who, formerly in affluence, are at this time, in consequence of an infamous spoliation, reduced to the most frightful misery."

"Unfortunate women! and where do they live, your highness?"

"I do not know."

"But how did you find out their situation?"

"Yesterday I went to the Temple. Your ladyship does not know what the Temple is?"

"No, my lord."

"It is a bazaar very amusing to see. I went there to make some purchases with my neighbour of the fourth floor."

"Your neighbour?"

"Have I not my room in the Rue du Temple?"

"I forgot."

"This neighbour is a charming little grisette; she calls herself Rigolette, this Miss Dimpleton is always laughing, and never had a lover."

"What virtue for a grisette!"

"It is not exactly from virtue that she is virtuous, but because, she says, she has no time to be in love; for she must work from twelve to fifteen hours a-day to earn twenty-five sous, on which she lives."

"She can live on so small an amount?"

"Rather; and she has even articles of luxury: two birds who eat more than she does; her little room is as neat as possible, and her dress really quite coquettish."

"Live on twenty-five sous a day! she is a prodigy."

"A real prodigy of order, labour, economy, and practical philosophy, I assure you; hence, I recommend her to you. She is, she says, a very skilful sempstress. At all events, you would not be ashamed to wear the clothes she may make."

"To-morrow I will send her some work. Poor girl! to live on so small a sum, and, so to speak, be unknown to us, who are rich, whose smallest caprices cost a hundred times that amount."

"You will interest yourself, then, in my little *protégée*, it is agreed; let us return to our other adventure."

"I am rejoiced that you have determined to interest yourself in my little *protégée*. I will now explain our new adventure. I had gone to the Temple with Rigolette, to purchase some furniture designed for the poor people in the garret, when upon accidentally examining an old secretary which was for sale, I found the draft of a letter written by a female to some individual, in which she complained that herself and daughter were reduced to the greatest misery, on account of the dishonesty of a lawyer. The secretary was part of a lot of furniture, which a woman of middle age had been compelled by her penury to sell; and I was told by the dealer that the woman and her daughter seemed to belong to the upper classes of society, and to bear their reverses with great fortitude and pride."

"And you do not know their abode?"

"Unfortunately, no. But I have given orders to M. de Graün to endeavour to discover it, even if he is obliged to apply to the police. It is possible that, stripped of everything, the mother and daughter have sought refuge in some miserably furnished lodgings. If it should be so, we have some hope, for the landlords report every evening the strangers who arrive in the course of the day."

"What a singular concurrence of circumstances!" said Madame d'Harville, with astonishment.

"This is not all. In a corner of this letter, found in the old secretary, were these words, '*Write to Madame de Lucenay.*'"

"What good fortune! perhaps we can find out something from the duchess," cried Madame d'Harville, with vivacity; then she continued, with a sigh, "But I am ignorant

of the name of this woman—how designate her to Madame de Lucenay?"

"You must ask if she does not know a widow, still young, of distinguished appearance, whose daughter, aged sixteen or seventeen, is named Claire."

"I remember the name. The name of my own daughter! it seems to me a motive the more to interest me in their misfortunes."

"I forgot to tell you that the brother of this widow committed suicide some months ago."

"If Madame de Lucenay knows this family," said Madame d'Harville, "such information will suffice to bring them to her mind. How desirous I am of going to see her. I will write her a note to-night, so that I shall be sure to find her to-morrow morning. Who can these women be? From what you know of them, they appear to belong to the upper classes of society. And to find themselves reduced to such distress! ah! for them poverty must be doubly frightful!"

"By the robbery of a notary, a miserable scoundrel, of whom I already know many other misdeeds—Jacques Ferrand."

"My husband's notary!" cried Clemence; "the notary of my stepmother! But you are deceived, my lord; he is looked upon as one of the most honourable men in the world."

"I have proofs to the contrary. But do not, I pray you, say a word on this subject to any one; he is as crafty as he is criminal, and to unmask him, I have need that he shall not suspect, or, rather, that he shall go on with impunity a short time longer. Yes; it is he who has despoiled these unfortunates, by denying a deposit which, from all appearances, had been placed in his hands by the brother of this widow."

"And this sum?"

"Was their sole resource! Oh! what a crime—what a crime!" cried Rudolph; "a crime that nothing can excuse—neither want nor passion. Often does hunger cause robbery, vengeance, murder. But this notary was already rich; and, clothed by society with a character almost holy, which imposes, ay, forces confidence, this man is induced to crime by a cold and implacable cupidity. The assassin only kills you once, and quickly with his knife: he kills you slowly, by all the horrors of despair and misery into which he plunges you. For a man like this Ferrand, no patrimony of the orphan or savings of the poor are sacred! You confide to him gold; this gold tempts him; he makes you a beggar. By the force of privations and toil, you have assured to yourself bread, and an asylum for your old age; *the will* of this man tears from your old age this bread and shelter. This is not all. See the fearful effects of these infamous spoliations: this widow of whom we speak may die of sorrow and distress; her daughter, young and handsome, without support, without resources, accustomed to a competency, unfit, from her education, to gain a living, soon finds herself between starvation and dishonour! she is lost! By this robbery, Jacques Ferrand is the cause of the death of the mother, the ruin of the child! he has killed the body of one, he has killed the soul of the other; and this, once more I say it, not at once, like other homicides, but with cruelty, and slowly."

Clemence had never heard Rudolph speak with so much bitterness and indignation; she listened in silence, struck by these words of eloquence, doubtless very sad, but which discovered a vigorous hatred of evil.

"Pardon me, madam," said Rudolph, after a moment's pause; "I cannot restrain my indignation in thinking of the cruel fate which your future *protégées* may have realised. Ah! believe me, the consequences of ruin and poverty are very seldom exaggerated."

"Oh! on the contrary, I thank your highness for having, by these terrible words, still more augmented, if that is possible, the sincere commiseration I feel for these unfortunates. Alas! it is above all for her daughter she must suffer; oh! it is frightful. But we will save them—we will assure their future. I am rich, but not as much so as I could wish now that I see a new use for money; but, if it is necessary, I will speak to d'Harville; I will make him so happy that he cannot refuse any of my new caprices. Our *protégées* are proud, your highness says: I like them better for it; pride in misfortune always proves an elevated mind. I will find the means to save them, without their knowing that they owe the succour they receive to a benefactor. It will be difficult; so much the better! Oh! I have already a project; you shall see, your highness, you shall see that I am not wanting in address and cunning."

"I already foresee the most Machiavelian combinations," said Rudolph, smiling.

"But we must first discover them: how I wish it was to-morrow. On leaving Madam de Lucenay I will go to their old lodgings; I will question their neighbours; I will see for myself; I will ask information from everybody. I will compromise myself if it is necessary! I shall be so proud to obtain by myself, and by myself alone, the result I desire: oh! I will succeed; this adventure is so touching. Poor women! it seems to me I feel more interest in them when I think of my child."

Rudolph, touched with this charitable eagerness, smiled sadly on seeing this lady, so handsome, so lovely, trying to forget in noble occupations the domestic troubles which afflicted her; the eyes of Clemence sparkled with vivacity, her cheeks were slightly suffused; the animation of her gesture, of her speech, gave new attraction to her ravishing countenance. She perceived that Rudolph was contemplating her in silence. She blushed, cast down her eyes; then raising them in charming confusion, she said, "You laugh at my enthusiasm? It is because I am impatient to taste those holy joys which are

about to reanimate my existence, until now sad and useless. Such, without doubt, was not the life I dreamed of; there is a sentiment, a happiness, more lively still that I can never know; although still very young, I must renounce it!" added Clemence, suppressing a sigh. "But thanks to you, my deliverer, always thanks to you, I have created for myself other interests; charity shall replace love. I am already indebted to your advice for such touching emotions! Your words, your highness, have so much influence! The more I meditate, the more I reflect on your ideas, the more I find them just, great, and fruitful. Oh! how much goodness your mind discloses! from what source have you, then, drawn these feelings of tender commiseration?"

"I have suffered much, I still suffer! this is the reason I know the cause of many sorrows."

"Your highness unhappy!"

"Yes; for one would say that, to prepare me to solace all kinds of sorrow, fate has willed I should undergo them all. A lover, it has struck me through the first woman that I loved with all the blind confidence of youth; a husband, through my wife; a son, it has struck me through my father; a father, through my child."

"I thought that the grand-duchess did not leave you any child?"

"She did not; but before my marriage with her I had a daughter, who died very young. Well! strange as it may appear to you, the loss of this child, whom I had hardly seen, is the sorrow of my life. The older I become, the more profound my regrets! Each year redoubles the bitterness. It seems to increase as her years would have increased. Now she would have been seventeen!"

"And does her mother still live?" asked Clemence.

"Oh! do not speak of her!" cried Rudolph. "Her mother is an unworthy creature, a being bronzed by egotism and ambition. Sometimes I ask myself if it were not better my child should be dead, than to have remained in the hands of her mother."

Clemence experienced a kind of satisfaction in hearing Rudolph express himself thus. "Oh! I conceive," cried she, "how you doubly regret your daughter!"

"I should have loved her so well! and, besides, it seems to me that among us princes there is always in our love for a son a kind of interest of race and name; but a daughter is loved for herself alone. And when one has seen, alas! humanity under the most sinister aspects, what delight to contemplate a pure and lovely being! to inhale her virgin purity, to watch over her with tender care! A mother the most fond and most proud of her daughter cannot experience this feeling; she is herself too similar to taste these ineffable delights: she will appreciate much more the manly qualities of a bold and noble boy. For, do you not find that that which renders, perhaps, still more touching the love of a mother for her son, a father for his daughter, is, that there is always in these affections a feeble being who has need of protection? The son protects the mother, the father protects the daughter."

"Oh, it is true."

"But, alas! why understand the ineffable joys, when one can never experience them?" said Rudolph, dejectedly. "But pardon me, madam; my regrets and my *souvenirs* have, in spite of myself, carried me away; you will excuse me?"

"Ah! believe I partake of your sorrows. Have I not the right? Have you not partaken of mine? Unfortunately, the consolations that I can offer you are in vain."

"No, no; the expression of your interest is sweet and salutary to me. It is weakness, but I cannot hear a young girl spoken of without thinking of her whom I have lost."

"These thoughts are so natural! Hold, my lord; since I have seen you, I have accompanied, in visits to the prisons, a lady of my acquaintance, who is a patroness of the work of the young women confined at Saint Lazare; this house contains many culprits. If I were not a mother, I should have judged them, doubtless, with still more severity, while I now feel for them pity; much softened in thinking that, perhaps, they had not been lost, except for the state of poverty and neglect they had been in from their infancy. I do not know why, but after these thoughts it seemed to me I loved my child the more."

"Come, courage," said Rudolph, with a melancholy smile; "this conversation leaves me quite reassured as to you. A salutary path is open to you; in following it, you will pass through, without stumbling, these years of trial, so dangerous for women, above all for a woman gifted as you are; your reward shall be great; you will still have to struggle and suffer—for you are very young—but you will renew your strength in thinking of the good you have done—of that which you still will do."

Madame d'Harville burst into tears. "At least," said she," "your assistance, your counsels, will never fail me?"

"Far or near, I shall always take the deepest interest in all that concerns you; always, as much as depends upon me, I will contribute to your happiness; to the man's to whom I have vowed the most constant friendship."

"Oh! thank your highness for this promise," said Clemence, drying her tears; "without your generous support, my strength would abandon me; but, believe me, I swear it here, I will constantly accomplish my duty."

On these words, a small door, concealed behind the tapestry, was opened roughly. Clemence uttered a cry. Rudolph shuddered. D'Harville appeared, pale and profoundly

affected; his eyes were wet with tears. The first astonishment over, the marquis said to Rudolph, giving him Sarah's letter, "Your highness, here is the infamous letter which I received just now before you. I pray you to burn it after you have read it."

Clemence looked at her husband with alarm.

"Oh, this is infamous!" cried Rudolph, indignantly.

"Yet there is something still more infamous than this anonymous scurrility—it is my own conduct."

"What do you mean to say?"

"A little while ago, instead of showing you this letter frankly, boldly, I concealed it from you; I pretended to be calm, while I had jealousy, anger, and despair in my heart; this is not all. Do you know what I did, my lord? I shamefully went and concealed myself behind this door to listen to you—to spy—yes, I have been wretch enough to doubt your honour. Oh! the author of this letter knows to whom he addresses it; he knows how weak my head is. Well, my lord, say, after hearing what I have just heard—for I have not lost a word of your conversation, and know why you go to the Rue du Temple—ought I not, on my knees ask for pardon and pity? and I do it, my lord. I do it, Clemence; I have no more hope but in your generosity."

"My dear Albert, what have I to pardon?" said Rudolph, extending both hands with the most touching cordiality. "*Now* you know our secrets, I am delighted. I can preach to you at my leisure. I am your confidant by compulsion, and, what is still better, you are the confidant of Madame d'Harville; that is to say, you now know all you have to expect from that noble heart."

"And Clemence, will you pardon me also?"

"Yes; on condition that you will assist me in assuring your own happiness," and she extended her hand to her husband, who pressed it with emotion.

"My dear marquis," cried Rudolph, "our enemies are unlucky; thanks to them, we are only the more intimate from the past. You never have more justly appreciated Madam d'Harville; she has never been more devoted to you; acknowledge that we are well avenged of the envious and wicked. That will answer while waiting for something better, for I divine from whence this came, and I am not accustomed to suffer patiently the injuries done to my friends. But this regards me. Adieu, madam; here is our *intrigue* discovered; you will no longer be alone in assisting your *protégées:* be assured we will get up some new mysterious enterprise, which the marquis must be very cunning to discover."

After having accompanied the prince to his carriage, to thank him again, the marquis retired to his own apartments without seeing Clemence again.

CHAPTER XII.

REFLECTIONS.

IT would be difficult to describe the tumultuous and contrary sentiments which agitated D'Harville when he found himself alone. He acknowledged with joy the falsity of the accusation against Rudolph and Clemence, but he was also convinced that he must renounce the hope of being loved by her. The more in her conversation with Rudolph, Clemence had shown herself courageous and resolute to do good, the more he bitterly reproached himself for having, with guilty egotism, linked this unhappy lady to his fate. Far from being consoled from the conversation he had just heard, he fell into a state of sadness, of inexpressible despondency. There is in a life of opulence without employment this terrible disadvantage; nothing turns its attention, nothing protects the mind from brooding on its sorrows, on itself. Never being compelled to occupy itself with the necessities of the future, or the labours of each day, it remains entirely a prey to great mental afflictions. Being able to possess all that gold can procure, it desires or regrets violently that which gold alone cannot procure.

The grief of D'Harville was desperate, for after all, he desired nothing but what was just and lawful.

To transports of vain anger succeeded a feeling of gloomy dejection. "Oh!" cried he, at once softened and cast down, "it is my fault, my fault! poor unhappy woman, I have deceived her, unworthily deceived her! She can, she ought to hate me; and yet, just now again, she evinced the most touching interest for me; but, instead of contenting myself with that, my foolish passions have carried me away. I became tender; I have spoken to her of my love, and hardly had my lips touched her hand, than she trembled with affright. If I could still have had any doubt of the invincible repugnance with which I inspire her, what she has just now said to the prince leaves me no illusion. Oh! it is frightful—frightful!

"And by what right did she confide to him this hideous secret? it is an unworthy betrayal of confidence! By what right? Alas! by the same right as prisoners have to complain of their executioner. Poor girl! so young and lovely, all that she could find to say that was cruel against the horrible fate to which I have doomed her, is, that such was not the lot she had dreamed of, and that she was very young to renounce love! I know Clemence; the word she has given me, which she has given to the prince, she will henceforth keep; she will be for me the most affectionate sister. Well! my position is not worthy of envy! to the cold and constrained feeling which existed between us, are going to succeed the most affectionate and the kindest relations, while she might have con-

tinued to treat me with a frozen contempt, without my daring to complain. Another torture! How I have suffered, my God! when I thought her guilty!—what terrible agony! But no, this fear is vain; Clemence has sworn not to fail in her duties; she will keep her promises; but at what a price! Just now, when she returned to me with her affectionate words, how her sad, soft, melancholy smile caused me pain! How much this return to her executioner must have cost her! Poor woman, how handsome she looked! For the first time I felt acute remorse, for until then her haughty coldness was her revenge. Oh, unfortunate man, unfortunate man that I am!"

After a long, sleepless night of bitter reflections, the agitation of D'Harville ceased as by enchantment.

He awaited the day with impatience. As soon as it was morning, he rang for his valet, old Joseph. On entering the room, the latter heard his master, to his great astonishment, humming a hunting-song, a sign, as rare as it was sure, of D'Harville's good-humour.

"Ah!" said the faithful servant, quite softened, "what a good voice your lordship has! what a shame you do not sing oftener."

"Really, Joseph, have I a good voice?" said D'Harville, laughing.

"My lord might have a voice as hoarse as an owl or a rattle, I should still think he had a good voice."

"Hold your tongue, flatterer!"

"When your lordship sings, it is a sign you are contented; and then your voice appears to me the most charming music in the world."

"In that case, Joseph, learn to open your long ears."

"What do you say?"

"You can enjoy this charming music every day."

"You will be happy every day, my lord?" cried Joseph, clasping his hands with astonished delight.

"Every day, my old Joseph! happy every day. Yes, no more sorrow—no more sadness. I can tell this to you, who are sole and discreet confidant of all my sorrows! I am overjoyed with happiness! My wife is an angel of goodness! she has asked pardon for her past coldness, attributing it to—can you guess? to jealousy!"

"To jealousy?"

"Yes; absurd suspicions, caused by anonymous letters."

"What indignity!"

"You comprehend? women have so much self-love! It needed nothing more to separate us; but, happily, last night we had an explanation. I undeceived her; to tell you of her joy would be impossible; for she loves me! oh, how she loves me! Thus, this cruel separation has ceased; judge of my joy!"

"Can it be true?" cried Joseph, with tears in his eyes. "Then, my lord, you are for ever happy, since the love of her ladyship was alone wanting, as you have told me."

"And to whom should I have told it, my poor old Joseph? Do you not possess a still more sorrowful secret? But let us not talk of sorrow; the day is too happy. You see, perhaps, I have wept! it is thus, you see, happiness overpowers me! I so little expected it! How weak I am!"

"Yes, yes, my lord can well weep for joy, who has wept so much for sorrow. Hold! am I not acting as you are? Brave tears! I would not part with them for ten years of my life. I have only one fear: it is, that I shall hardly be able to keep from throwing myself at my lady's feet the first time I see her."

"Old fool! you are as unreasonable as your master. Now I have a fear that this will not last. I am too happy! what is wanting?"

"Nothing, my lord, absolutely nothing."

"It is on this account I am mistrustful of happiness so perfect—so complete!"

"Alas! if it was not for—but no, I dare not."

"I understand you; well, believe your fears are vain; the change that my happiness causes me is so great, so profound, that I am almost sure of being saved."

"How is that?"

"My physician has told me a hundred times, that often a violent mental shock sufficed to give or cure my malady. Why should not emotions of happiness produce the same effect?"

"If you believe this, my lord, it will be so—it is so—you are cured! Why this is, indeed, a blessed day! Ah! as you say, her ladyship, is a good angel descended from heaven; and I begin to be almost alarmed myself; it is, perhaps, too much felicity for one day; but I must think—if to reassure you it only needs a small sorrow—I have it!"

"How?"

"One of your friends has received, very fortunately and seasonably, as it happens, a sword-cut—not at all serious, it is true; but no matter, it is enough to make you a little sorry; that there may be, as you desire it, a little trouble on this happy day. It is true, that in regard to that, it had been better if the thrust had been more dangerous; but we must be contented as it is."

"Will you be quiet? Of whom do you speak?"

"Of his grace the Duke of Lucenay. He is wounded! a scratch on the arm. He came yesterday to see you, and he said he would come this morning and ask for a cup of tea."

"Poor Lucenay! why did you not tell me?"

"Last night I was not able to see my lord."

After a moment's thought, D'Harville replied, "You are right; this light sorrow will

doubtless satisfy jealous destiny. But an idea has just struck me; I have a mind to have this morning a bachelor breakfast, all friends of M. de Lucenay, to congratulate him on the happy result of his duel; he will be enchanted."

"Joy for ever! Make up lost time. How many covers? so that I can give the orders."

"Six, in the little winter breakfast-parlour."

"And the invitations?"

"I will go and write them. A man from the stables can take them round on horseback. It is early; they will all be found at home. Ring."

D'Harville entered his cabinet, and wrote the following notes, without any other address than the name of the invited

"My dear * * *—This is a circular; an impromptu affair is in agitation. Lucenay is to come and breakfast with me this morning; he counts only on a *tête-à-tête;* cause him a very agreeable surprise by joining me, and a few other of his friends, whom I have also advised.

"At noon, precisely.

"A. D'HARVILLE."

"Let some one mount a horse immediately," said D'Harville, to a servant who answered the bell, "and deliver these letters." Then, turning to Joseph, he directed him to address them, as follows: "M. le Vicomte de Saint Rémy. Lucenay cannot do without him," said D'Harville to himself. "M. de Monville—one of his travelling companions. Lord Douglas—his faithful partner at whist. Baron de Sezannes—the friend of his youth. Have you written?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Send these letters without losing a moment," said D'Harville. "Ah, Philippe! ask M. Doublet to come to me." The servant retired. "Well! what is the matter?" asked D'Harville of Joseph, who looked at him with amazement.

"I cannot get over it, sir! I never saw you so gay; and, besides, you, who are commonly so pale, have a fine colour—your eyes sparkle."

"Happiness! old Joseph, happiness! Oh! now you must assist me in a scheme. You must go and find out from Juliette, who has charge of her ladyship's diamonds."

"Yes, it is Mademoiselle Juliette, my lord, who takes care of them; I helped her, not a week ago to clean them."

"You go and ask her the name and address of the jeweller of her mistress; but she must not say a word on the subject to my lady."

"Ah! I understand! A surprise."

"Go quickly. Here is M. Doublet. My dear M. Doublet, I am going to frighten you," said he, laughing. "I am going to make you utter cries of distress."

"Me! my lord?"

"You!"

"I will do all in my power to satisfy your lordship."

"I am going to spend a great deal of money, M. Doublet—an enormous amount of money."

"What of that, my lord? we are able to do it—well able to do it."

"For a long time I've been possessed with a notion of building. I have it in contemplation to add a gallery on the garden, to the right wing of the hotel. After a long hesitation, I have quite decided. You must tell my architect to-day, so that he can come and talk over the plans. Well, M. Doublet, you don't groan over this expense?"

"I can assure your lordship that I do not groan."

"This gallery will be destined for *fêtes;* I wish it to be built, as it were, by enchantment; now, enchantments being very dear, you must sell fifteen or twenty thousand livres of stock, to be ready to furnish the funds, for I wish the work commenced as soon as possible."

Joseph entered.

"Here is the address of the jeweller, my lord; his name is Baudoin."

"My dear M. Doublet, you will go, I beg you, to this jeweller, and tell him to bring here, in an hour, a diamond necklace worth about two thousand louis. Women can never have too many jewels, now that dresses are trimmed with them. You will arrange with the jeweller for the payment."

"Yes, my lord. It is on account of the surprise that I do not groan this time; Diamonds are like buildings, the value remains; and, besides, this surprise to the Marchioness! It is, as I had the honour to say the other day—there is not in the world a happier man than your lordship."

"Good M. Doublet!" said d'Harville, smiling; "his felicitations are always so inconceivably *àpropos.*"

"It is their sole merit, my lord; and they have, perhaps, this merit because they come from the bottom of the heart. I go to the jeweller," said Doublet, retiring.

As soon as he was gone, d'Harville paced the floor, his arms folded, his eyes fixed and meditative.

Suddenly his countenance changed; it no longer expressed the content of which the attendant and the old servant had just been the dupe, but a calm, cold, and mournful resolution. After having walked some time, he seated himself, as if overcome by the weight of his troubles, with his face buried in his hands. Then he suddenly arose, wiped away a tear which moistened his burning eyelid, and said, with an effort, "Come, courage."

He wrote letters to several persons about insignificant objects; but in the letters he appointed or put off different meetings several days. This correspondence finished, Joseph came in; he was so gay that he so far forgot himself as to sing in his turn.

"Joseph, you have a very fine voice," said his master, smiling.

"So much the worse, my lord, for I never knew it; something sings so loudly within, that it must be heard without."

"You will put these letters in the post-office."

"Yes, my lord; but where will you receive these gentlemen?"

"Here, in my cabinet; they will smoke after breakfast, and the odour of the tobacoo will not reach her ladyship."

At this moment the noise of a carriage was heard in the courtyard.

"It is her ladyship going out; she ordered the horses this morning at an early hour," said Joseph.

"Run and beg her to come here before she goes out."

"Yes, my lord."

Hardly had the domestic gone, than d'Harville approached a glass, and examined himself minutely. "Well, well," said he, in a gloomy tone; "that's right — the cheeks flushed, the eye sparkling—joy or fear—no matter—as long as they are deceived. Let us see now—a smile on the lips. There are so many kinds of smiles. But who can distinguish the false from the real? who can penetrate under this lying mask, to say, this smile conceals a black despair? no one, happily, no one! Stay! yes, love could never be mistaken; no, its instinct would enlighten it. But I hear my wife—my wife! Come to your post, inauspicious buffoon."

"Good-day, Albert," said Madam d'Harville, with a sweet smile, giving him her hand. "But what is the matter, my friend? You appear so happy and gay!"

"It is, that at the moment you came in, dear little sister, I was thinking of you. Besides, I was under the influence of an excellent resolution."

"That does not surprise me."

"What took place yesterday—your admirable generosity, the noble conduct of the prince—gave me much to think about, and I am a convert to your ideas. You would not have excused me last night if I had too easily renounced your love, I am sure, Clemence."

"What language, what a happy change!" cried Madam d'Harville. "Oh! I was very sure, that in addressing myself to your heart, to your reason, you would comprehend me."

"Now I have no longer any doubts for the future."

"Nor I, Clemence, I assure you. Yes, since the resolution I have taken last night, the future, which seemed to me dark and gloomy, has become singularly cleared up—simplified."

"Nothing is more natural, my friend; now we move towards one object, leaning fraternally on each other: at the end of our career we will find ourselves as we are to-day. In fine, I desire that you shall be happy, and this shall be so, for I have placed it there," said Clemence, putting her finger on his forehead, ere she resumed, with a charming expression, lowering her hand to his heart: "No, I am mistaken; it is here that this good thought will incessantly watch for you, and for me also; and you shall see what is the obstinacy of a devoted heart."

"Dear Clemence," answered d'Harville, with constrained emotion; then, after a pause, he added, gaily, "I begged you to come here before your departure to inform you that I could not take tea with you this morning. I have a number of persons to breakfast with me; it is a kind of impromptu assemblage to congratulate M. de Lucenay on the happy issue of his duel."

"What a coincidence: M. de Lucenay comes to breakfast with you, while I go, perhaps very indiscreetly, to invite myself to do the same with Madam de Lucenay; for I have much to talk to her about my unknown *protégées*. From there I intend to go to the prison of Saint Lazare, with Madam de Blinval, for you do not know all my ambition; at this moment I am intriguing to be admitted into the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society."

"Truly, you are insatiable," said the marquis; "thus," added he, restraining with great difficulty his emotion, "thus I shall see you no more—to-day!" he hastened to add.

"Are you vexed that I go out this morning so early?" asked Madam d'Harville, quickly, astonished at the tone of his voice. "If you ask it, I will put off my visit to Madam de Lucenay."

The marquis was on the point of betraying himself; but said, in the most affectionate manner, "Yes, my dear, I am as much vexed to see you go out as I shall be impatient to see you return; these are defects I shall never correct myself for."

"And you will do well, dear; for I should be very angry."

A bell announcing a visit resounded throughout the hotel.

"Here are, doubtless, some of your guests," said Madam d'Harville; "I leave you—by the way, what are you going to do to-night? If you have not disposed of your evening, I wish you would accompany me to the opera; perhaps, now, music will please you more!"

"I place myself under your orders with the greatest pleasure."

"Are you going out soon? Shall I see you again before dinner?"

"I am not going out. You will find me here."

"Then, when I return, I will come and see if your bachelor breakfast has been amusing."

"Adieu, Clemence."

"Bye, bye! I leave you the field clear; I wish you much pleasure. Be very gay!" And after having cordially pressed the hand of her husband, Clemence went out by one door a moment before M. de Lucenay entered by another.

"She wishes me much amusement—she tells me to be gay—she went away tranquilly—smiling! this does honour to my dissimulation. By Jove! I did not think myself so good an actor. But here is Lucenay."

The Duke of Lucenay entered the room; his wound had been so slight that he did not carry his arm in a sling. He was one of those men whose countenance was always cheerful and contemptuous, movements always restless, and mania to make a bustle insurmountable. Yet, notwithstanding his caprices, his pleasantries in very bad taste, and his enormous nose, he was not a vulgar man, thanks to a kind of natural dignity and courageous impertinence which never abandoned him.

"How indifferent you must suppose me to be as regards anything concerning you, my dear Henry!" said d'Harville, extending his hand to Lucenay; "but it was only this morning I heard of your disagreeable adventure."

"Disagreeable! come now, marquis! I got the worth of my money, as they say. I never laughed so much in my life! M. Robert appeared so solemnly determined not to pass for having a cold. You don't know what was the cause of the duel? The other night, at the embassy, I asked him, before your wife and the Countess M'Gregor, how he got on with his cough; between us, he had not this inconvenience. But never mind. You understand—to say that before handsome women is annoying."

"What folly! I recognise you there! But who is this M. Robert?"

"I' faith! I don't know anything about him: he is a gentleman whom I met at the watering-places; he passed before us in the winter garden at the embassy; I called him to play off this joke; he answered the second day after by giving me, very gallantly, a nice little thrust with his sword. But don't let us talk of this nonsense. I come to beg a cup of tea. Saying this, Lucenay threw himself at full length on the sofa; after which, introducing the end of his cane between the wall and the frame of a picture placed over his head, he commenced moving it backward and forward.

"I expected you, my dear Henry, and I have arranged a little surprise for you."

"Oh, what is it?" cried Lucenay, pushing the picture into a very ticklish position.

"You'll end by pulling that picture on your head."

"That's true, by Jove! you have the eye of an eagle. But your surprise, what is it?"

"I have sent for some friends to breakfast with us."

"Ah, good! marquis, bravo! bravissimo! archibravissimo!" screamed Lucenay, striking heavy blows on the sofa cushions. "And whom shall we have? Saint Remy?"

"No; he has been in the country for some days."

"What the devil can he manage to do in the country in winter? Are you sure he is not in Paris?"

"Very sure; I wrote him to be my second; he was absent; I fell back on Lord Douglas and Sezannes?"

"That is fortunate; they breakfast with us."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried Lucenay, anew. Then he turned and twisted himself on the sofa, accompanying his loud cries with a series of somersaults that would have astonished a rope-dancer. The acrobatic evolutions were interrupted by the arrival of Saint Rémy.

"I have no need to ask if Lucenay was here," said the viscount, gaily. "He can be heard below."

"How! is it you? beautiful Sylvan! countryman! wolf's cub!" cried the duke, much surprised; "I thought you were in the country."

"I came back, yesterday; I received the invitation just now, and here I am, quite delighted at this surprise," and Saint Rémy gave his hand to Lucenay, and then to the marquis.

"I take this very kind in you, my dear Saint Rémy. Is it not natural that the friends of Lucenay should rejoice at the happy issue of this duel, which, after all, might have had a very grievous result?"

"But," resumed the duke obstinately, "what have you been doing in the country in midwinter, Saint Rémy? that beats me."

"How curious he is!" said the viscount, addressing d'Harville. "I wish to wean myself from Paris, since I must so soon quit it."

"Ah! yes, this beautiful whim to attach yourself to the legation of France at Gerolstein. None of your nonsense and stuff about diplomacy; you will never go there. My wife says so, and everybody repeats it."

"I assure you that Madam de Lucenay is mistaken, like everyone else."

"She told you before me that it was a folly."

"I have committed so many in my lifetime!"

"Elegant and charming follies, very well, so as to ruin yourself, as they say, by your Sardanapalus's magnificence, I admit that; but to go and bury yourself in such a hole of a court as Gerolstein! Come, now, this is folly, and you are too sensible to do a stupid thing."

"Take care, my dear Lucenay; in abusing this German court you will have a quarrel with d'Harville, the intimate friend of the grand-duke, who, besides, received me most kindly the other night at the ambassade of * * *, where I was presented to him."

"Really! my dear Henry," said d'Harville, "if you knew the grand-duke as I know him, you would comprehend that Saint Rémy could have repugnance to go and pass some time at Gérolstein."

"I believe you, marquis, although your grand-duke is said to be proudly original, but that doesn't prevent that a beau like Saint Rémy, the finest flower among blossoms, cannot live, excepting at Paris; his value is only known at Paris."

The other guests had just arrived, when Joseph entered and said a few words in a low tone to his master.

"Gentlemen, will you allow me," said the marquis; "it is the jeweller, who brings me some diamonds to choose for my wife—a surprise. You know, Lucenay, you and I being husbands of the old school."

"Oh! if you talk of a surprise," cried the Duke, "my wife gave me one yesterday; a famous one, I tell you."

"Some splendid present?"

"She asked for a hundred thousand francs."

"And as you are a magnifico, you"—

"Lent them! they will be mortgaged on her Arnouville farm—short accounts make long friends. But never mind; to lend in two hours one hundred thousand francs to some one who wants them, is generous and rare. Is it not, spendthrift? You who are an expert at loans," said the Duke de Lucenay, laughing, without dreaming of the bearing of his speech.

Notwithstanding his audacity, the viscount at first slightly blushed; but he said with effrontery, "One hundred thousand francs! enormous. How can a woman ever have need of such an amount? With men that's another story."

"I don't know what she wanted with the money. It is all the same to me. Some bills, probably some urgent creditors; that's her look-out. And, besides, you well know, my dear Saint Rémy, that in lending her my money, it would have been in the worst taste in the world to ask what she wanted it for."

"It is, however, a very excusable curiosity in those who lend, to wish to know what the borrower wants to do with the money," said the Viscount, laughing.

"Saint Rémy," said d'Harville, "you, who have such excellent taste, must aid me in choosing the set I intend for my wife; your approbation will sanction my choice—be it law."

The jeweller entered, carrying several caskets in a large leather bag.

"Ah! here is M. Baudoin!" said Lucenay.

"At your grace's service."

"I am sure that it is you who ruin my wife with your infernal and dazzling temptations," said Lucenay.

"Her grace has only had her diamonds reset this winter," said the jeweller, slightly embarrassed. "I have this moment left them with her grace, on my way here."

Saint Rémy knew that Madam de Lucenay, to assist him, had changed her diamonds for false ones; this conversation was very disagreeable to him, but he said boldly,

"How curious these husbands are! do not answer, M. Baudoin."

"Curious! goodness, no," answered the duke; "my wife pays; she is richer than I am."

During this conversation, Baudoin had displayed on a bureau several admirable necklaces of rubies and diamonds.

"How splendid! how divinely the stones are cut!" said Lord Douglas.

"Alas! my lord," answered the jeweller, "I employed in this work one of the best artisans in Paris; unfortunately, he has gone mad, and I shall never find his equal. My broker tells me that it is probably misery which has turned his brain, poor man."

"Misery! you confide diamonds to a man in poverty!"

"Certainly, my lord, and I have never known an instance of an artisan concealing or secreting anything confided to him, however poor he might be."

"How much for this necklace?" asked d'Harville.

"Your lordship will remark that the stones are of splendid cutting, and the purest water, almost all of the same size."

"Here are some wordy precautions most menacing for your purse," said Saint Rémy, laughing; "expect now, d'Harville, some exorbitant price."

"Come, M. Baudoin, your lowest price?" said d'Harville.

"I do not wish to make your lordship haggle, so I say the lowest is forty-two thousand francs."

"Gentlemen!" cried Lucenay, "let us admire d'Harville in silence. To arrange a surprise for his wife for forty-two thousand francs! The devil! don't go and noise that abroad; it will be a detestable example."

"Laugh as much as you please, gentlemen," said the marquis gaily. "I am in love with my wife, I do not conceal it; I boast of it!"

"That is easily seen," said Saint Rémy; "such a present speaks more than all the protestations in the world."

"I take this necklace, then," said d'Harville, "if you approve of the black enamel setting, Saint Rémy."

"It sets off to advantage the brilliancy of the stones; they are beautifully arranged."

"I decide then, for this necklace," said d'Harville. "You will have to settle with M. Doublet, my steward, Baudoin."

"M. Doublet has advised me, my lord," said the jeweller, and he went out, after having put in his sack, without counting them, the different sets of jewels which he had brought, and which Saint Rémy had for a long time handled and examined during this conversation.

D'Harville, in giving the necklace to Joseph who awaited his orders, whispered to him, "Mlle. Juliette must put these diamonds quietly with her lady's, without her sus-

pecting it, so that the surprise will be complete."

At this moment the butler announced that breakfast was served; the guests passed into the breakfast-room and seated themselves at table.

"Do you know, my dear d'Harville," said the duke, "that this house is one of the most elegant and best arranged in Paris?"

"It is commodious enough, but it wants space; my project is to add a gallery on the garden. Madam d'Harville desires to give some grand balls, and our three saloons are not large enough; besides, I find nothing more inconvenient than the encroachments made by a fête on the apartments which one habitually occupies, and from which, for the time, you are exiled."

"I am of your opinion," said Saint Rémy; "nothing is in worst taste, more in the 'city' fashion, than these forced removals by authority of a ball or concert. To give fêtes really splendid, without any inconvenience to one's self, a particular suite of apartments must be arranged exclusively for them; and, besides, vast and splendid saloons, destined for grand balls, ought to have a different character from rooms in ordinary occupation: there is between the two species of apartments the same difference as between a splendid fresco and a cabinet picture."

"He is right," said d'Harville; "what a pity, that Saint Rémy has not twelve or fifteen hundred thousand livres a year! what wonders we should enjoy!"

"Since we have the happiness to enjoy a representative government," said the Duke de Lucenay, "ought not the country to vote a million a year to Saint Rémy, and charge him to represent at Paris French taste and fashion, which would thus decide the fashion of Europe and the world?"

"Adopted!" was cried in chorus.

"And this million should be annually raised, in form of a tax on these abominable misers who, possessors of enormous fortunes, shall be arraigned, tried, and convicted of living like skinflints," added Lucenay.

"And as such," said d'Harville, "condemned to defray the magnificences which they ought to display."

"While waiting for the decision which will legalise the supremacy which Saint Rémy now exercises in fact," said d'Harville, "I ask his advice for the gallery I am about to construct."

"My feeble lights are at your disposal, d'Harville."

"And when shall this inauguration take place, my dear fellow?"

"Next year, I suppose, for I am going to commence immediately."

"What a man of projects you are!"

"I have many others. I contemplate a complete change at Val Richer."

"Your estate in Burgundy?"

"Yes; there are some admirable plans to execute there, if my life is spared."

"Poor old man! But have you not lately bought a farm near Val Richer to add to your estate?"

"Yes, a very good affair that my notary advised."

"Who is this rare and precious notary who advises such good things?"

"M. Jacques Ferrand."

At this name a slight shade passed over the viscount's brow.

"Is he really as honest a man as he is reputed to be?" asked he, carelessly, of d'Harville, who then remembered what Rudolph had related to Clemence concerning the notary.

"Jacques Ferrand? what a question; why he is a man of antique probity!" said Lucenay. "As respected as respectable. Very pious—that hurts no one. Excessively avaricious—which is a guarantee for his clients."

"He is, in fine, one of our notaries of the old school, who ask you for whom you take them when you speak of a receipt for money confided to them."

"For no other cause than that I would confide my whole fortune to him."

"But where the devil, Saint Rémy, did you get your doubts concerning this worthy man, of proverbial integrity?"

"I am only the echo of vague rumours, otherwise I have no reason to defame this phœnix of notaries. But to return to your projects, d'Harville: what are you going to build at Val Richer? The chateau is said to be superb."

"You shall be consulted, my dear Saint Rémy, and sooner, perhaps, than you think, for I delight in these works; it seems to me there is nothing more pleasant than to have your plans spread out for years to come. To-day this project—in a year this one—still later some other; add to to this a charming wife whom one adores, is the motive in all your plans, and life passes gently enough."

"I believe you; it is a real paradise on earth."

"Now," said d'Harville, when breakfast was over, "if you will smoke a cigar in my cabinet, you will find some excellent ones there."

They arose from the table and returned to the cabinet of the marquis; the door of his sleeping apartment, which communicated with it, was open. The sole ornament of this room was a panoply of arms. Lucenay, having lighted a cigar, followed the marquis into his chamber.

"Here are some splendid guns, truly; faith, I do not know which to prefer, the French or the English."

"Douglas," cried Lucenay, "come and see if these guns will not compare with the best Mantons."

Lord Douglas, Saint Rémy, and two other

guests entered the chamber of the marquis to examine the arms.

D'Harville took a pistol, cocked it, and said, laughing, "Here, gentlemen, is the universal panacea for all woes, the spleen, or ennui." He placed the muzzle laughingly to his mouth.

"I prefer another specific," said Saint Rémy; "this is only good in desperate cases."

"Yes, but it is so prompt," said d'Harville. "Click! and it is done; the will is not more rapid. Really! it is marvellous."

"Take care, d'Harville, such jokes are always dangerous, and accident might happen," said Lucenay, seeing the marquis again place the pistol to his lips.

"Do you think that if it was loaded I would play these tricks?"

"Doubtless, no, but it is always wrong."

"Look here, sirs, this is the way they do it; the barrel is introduced delicately between the teeth, and then"—

"How foolish you are, d'Harville, when you once get a-going," said Lucenay, shrugging his shoulders.

"The finger is placed on the trigger," added d'Harville.

"Is he not a child—childish at his age?"

"A little movement on the lock," continued the marquis, "and one goes straight to the land of spirits."

With these words the pistol went off.

D'Harville had blown his brains out!

We will renounce the task; we cannot describe the affright, the amazement, of the guests.

The next day was seen in a newspaper.

"Yesterday an event, as unforeseen as deplorable, agitated the whole Faubourg St. Germain. One of those imprudent acts, which lead every year to such fatal accidents, has caused a most lamentable affair. Here are the facts, which we have gathered, the authenticity of which we can guarantee.

"The Marquis d'Harville, possessor of an immense fortune, hardly twenty-six years of age, noted for the elevation of his character and the goodness of his heart, married to a lady whom he adored, had invited a few friends to breakfast. On leaving the table, they passed into the sleeping apartment of M. d'Harville, where was displayed several valuable arms. In showing some to his guests, M. d'Harville, in jest, placed a pistol, which he did not know was loaded, to his lips. In his security, he drew the trigger; it went off, and the unhappy young nobleman fell dead, with his skull fractured. The frightful consternation of the surrounding friends may easily be imagined, to whom, but a moment before, in the bloom of youth, he had just been conversing of his projects for the future. And as if all the circumstances attending this painful event should be more cruel from contrast, the same morning, M. d'Harville, wishing to surprise his wife, had just purchased a valuable necklace. And it is just at this moment, when, perhaps, life never appeared more smiling, more desirable, that he falls a victim to a deplorable accident.

"Before such a misfortune all reflections are useless; we can only remain, as it were, annihilated by the inscrutable decrees of Providence."

We quote the papers merely to show that general belief attributed the death of d'Harville to a deplorable accident. It is hardly necessary to say, that d'Harville carried with him to the tomb the mysterious secret of this voluntary death. Yes, voluntary; calculated and meditated with as much coolness as generosity, so that Clemence could not have the slightest suspicion of the true cause of this suicide.

Thus the project of which d'Harville had conversed with his friends and his intendant, his confidential communications to his old servant, the surprise which he arranged for his wife, were just so many snares laid for public credulity.

How could a man be supposed about to kill himself, who was so much occupied with plans for the future—so desirous of pleasing his wife? His death was therefore attributed, and could only be attributed, to an imprudence. As to the resolution, an incurable despair had dictated it.

"My death alone can dissolve these ties—it must be—I shall kill myself." And this is the reason why d'Harville had accomplished this grave and melancholy sacrifice.

If a suitable law of divorce had existed, would he have committed suicide? No! He could have repaired in part the evil he had done; restored his wife to liberty; permitted her to find happiness in another union. The inexorable immutability of the law, then, often renders certain faults irremediable; or, as in this case, only allows them to be effaced by a new crime.

CHAPTER XIII.

SAINT LAZARE.

WE think we ought to inform the most scrupulous of our readers that the prison of Saint Lazare, specially devoted to prostitutes and female thieves, is daily visited by several ladies, whose charities, name, and social position command general respect. These ladies, brought up amid the splendours of fortune, who with good reason are classed among the most elevated in society, come every week to pass long hours with the miserable prisoners. Observing in these degraded beings the least aspiration after virtue, the least regret for a past crime, they encourage the better tendencies and repentance; and, by the powerful magic of the words, "duty," "honour," "virtue," sometimes they rescue from the

depths of degradation one abandoned, despised, ruined being.

Accustomed to the refinements of the best society, these courageous women leave their houses, pressing their lips to the virginal cheek of their daughters, pure as the angels of heaven, and go to the gloomy prisons to brave the gross indifference, or the criminal conversation of thieves and prostitutes.

Faithful to their mission of high morality, they valiantly descend into the infected receptacle, place the hand on all these ulcerated hearts, and if some feeble pulsation of honour reveals to them the slightest hope of saving them, they contend and tear from an almost irrevocable perdition the wretch of whom they do not despair. The scrupulous reader, to whom we address ourselves, will calm, then, his sensibility, in thinking that he will only hear and see, after all, what these venerated women see and hear every day.

After having, we hope, appeased the reader's scruples, we introduce him to Saint Lazare, an immense edifice, of imposing and gloomy aspect situated in the Rue du Faubourg Saint Denis.

Ignorant of the terrible drama that was passing at home, Madam d'Harville had gone to the prison, after having obtained some information from Madam de Lucenay concerning the two unhappy women whom the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand had plunged into distress. Madam de Blinval, one of the patronesses before spoken of, not being able to accompany Clemence to Saint Lazare, she came alone. She was received with much kindness by the director, and by several inspectresses, known by their black dresses and a blue riband with a silver medal.

One of these, a woman of advanced age, of a soft and grave expression, remained alone with Madam d'Harville, in a small room adjoining the office.

Madam Armand, the inspectress, who had remained alone with Madam d'Harville, possessed to an extreme degree foreknowledge, and insight into the character of the prisoners. Her word and judgment was of paramount authority in the house.

She said to Clemence: "Since your ladyship has been kind enough to request me to point out those inmates who, from good conduct or sincere repentance, should merit your interest, I believe I can recommend one unfortunate, whom I believe more unhappy than culpable; for I do not think I deceive myself in affirming, that it is not too late to save this girl, a poor child of sixteen, or seventeen at most."

"For what has she been confined?"

"She is guilty of being found on the Champs Elysées in the evening. As it is forbidden her class, under very severe penalties, to frequent, either day or night, certain places, and the Champs Elysées is among the number of these prohibited places, she was arrested."

"And she appears interesting to you?"

"I have never seen more regular or more ingenuous features. Imagine, my lady, a picture of the Virgin. What gave still more to her appearance a most modest expression was, that when she came here she was dressed like a peasant girl of the environs of Paris."

"She is, then, a country girl?"

"No, my lady. The inspectors recognised her. She lived in a horrible house in the city, from which she was absent two or three months; but as she had not her name erased from the police registers, she remained under the control of the officers, who sent her here."

"But perhaps she left Paris to endeavour to reinstate herself?"

"I think so. I felt at once interested in her. I interrogated her as to the past; I asked her if she came from the country, telling her to be of good cheer, if, as I hoped, she wished to return to the paths of virtue."

"What did she reply?"

"Lifting on me her large blue, melancholy eyes, full of tears, she said to me, in a tone of angelic sweetness, 'I thank you, madam, for your kindness, but I cannot speak of the past; I have been arrested—I was wrong—I do not complain.' 'But where do you come from? Where have you been since you left the city? If you have been to the country to seek an honest existence, say so; prove it; we will write to the police to obtain your discharge. You shall be erased from the police lists, and your good resolutions shall be encouraged.' 'I entreat you, madam, do not question me; I cannot answer you,' she replied. 'But when you leave here, do you wish to return to that horrible house again?' 'Oh, never!' she cried. 'What will you do then?' 'Heaven knows!' she replied, letting her head fall on her breast."

"This is very strange! She expresses herself"—

"In very good terms, madam; her deportment is timid, respectful, but without meanness. I will say more. Notwithstanding the extreme sweetness of her voice and her look, there is at times in her accent, in her attitude, a kind of sorrowful pride which confounds me. If she did not belong to the unhappy class of which she is a part, I should almost think that this pride is that of a soul conscious of its elevation."

CHAPTER XIV.

MONT SAINT JEAN.

THE clock of the prison struck two.

To the severe frost which had reigned for some days, a temperature soft, mild, almost springlike, had succeeded; the sunbeams were reflected on the water of a large square basin, with a stone margin, situated in the middle of a yard, planted with trees, and surrounded by high, gloomy

walls, pierced with a number of grated windows; wooden benches were placed here and there in this vast enclosure, which served as the prisoners' exercise ground.

The tinkling of a bell announcing the hour of recreation, the prisoners noisily rushed into the court through a strong wicket-door which was opened for them. These women, dressed in uniform, wore black caps and long blue woollen frocks, confined by a belt and iron buckle. There were two hundred prostitutes there, condemned for infringements of the laws which register them, and place them without the common law.

At the sight of this collection of lost creatures, one cannot prevent the sad thought, that many among them have been pure and virtuous, at least some time. We make this restriction, because a great number have been vitiated, corrupted, depraved, not only from their youth, but from their most tender infancy.

When the prisoners rushed into the court, screeching and shouting, it was easy to see that joy alone at escaping from labour did not render them so noisy. After having pushed through the only door that led to the yard, the crowd separated, and made a circle around a deformed being, whom they overwhelmed with hootings.

She was a woman of about thirty-six or forty, short, thick-set, crooked, her neck sunk between unequal shoulders. They had pulled off her cap, and her hair, of a rather faded yellow, uncombed, tangled, striped with gray, fell over her low and stupid face. She was dressed in a blue frock, like the other prisoners, and carried under her arm a bundle tied up in a miserable, ragged handkerchief. She tried to ward off the threatened blows with her left arm.

Nothing could be more sadly grotesque than the features of this poor creature. It was a ridiculous and hideous face, lengthened to a snout, wrinkled, tanned, and dirty, pierced with nostrils, and small red eyes, squinting and bloodshot; by turns supplicating or angry, she implored and scolded; but they laughed more at her complaints than at her threats. This woman was the butt of the prisoners. One fact alone, however, should have saved her from their bad treatment; she was about to become a mother. But her ugliness and imbecility, and the habit they had of looking upon her as a victim devoted to the general amusement, rendered her persecutors implacable, notwithstanding their ordinary respect for maternity.

Among the most furious of the enemies of Mont Saint Jean (this was the name of the drudge) could have been remarked La Louve —a tall girl of about twenty, active, masculine, with rather regular features; her coarse, black hair was shaded with red; her face was disfigured with pimples; her thick lips were slightly covered with a bluish down; her dark eyebrows, very thick and heavy, met above her large brown eyes; something violent, ferocious, and brutal in her expression, a kind of habitual laugh, which, lifting her upper lip when she was angry, showing her white and scattering teeth, explains her surname of La Louve (She-Wolf). Nevertheless, this face expressed more audacity and insolence than cruelty—in a word, rather vicious than thoroughly bad, this woman was yet susceptible of some good feelings.

"Oh, dear, what have I done to you?" cried Mont Saint Jean. "Why do you treat me so?"

"Because it amuses us. Because you are only fit to be tormented. It is your trade. Look at yourself; you will see you have no right to complain."

"But you know I do not complain until I can't stand it any longer."

"Well, we'll leave you alone if you will tell us why you are called Mont Saint Jean?"

"Yes, yes, tell us that."

"I have told you this a hundred times. An old soldier, whom I once loved, was called so because he was wounded in the battle of Mont Saint Jena. I took his name. Are you content now? You make me repeat the same things."

"If he looked like you he was a beauty! He must have been one of the Invalids."

"I am ugly, I know. Say what you please; all the same to me; but don't strike me, that's all I ask."

"What have you got in that old handkerchief?" said La Louve.

"Yes, yes, what is it? Come, show it."

"Oh, no, I entreat you!" said the poor creature, holding the bundle tightly in her hands.

"You must give it up."

"Yes, take it from her, La Louve."

"What is it?"

"Well, it is baby's clothes. I have commenced for my child. I make them with the old pieces of linen I pick up. It is of no consequence to you, is it?"

"Oh, let us see the baby-linen of Mont Saint Jean! Come, come!" cried La Louve, snatching the bundle from the hands of Mont Saint Jean.

The wretched handkerchief was torn to pieces in the struggle, and its contents, composed of rags and bits of stuff of all colours, were strewn on the ground and trampled under foot, amid shouts of laughter.

"What rags! What trash! An old rag shop! Takes more thread than stuff! Here, pick up your duds, Mont Saint Jean!"

"How wicked you are! How bad you must be!" cried the poor creature, running here and there after the scraps and rags, which she tried to pick up, notwithstanding the blows they gave her. "I have never harmed any one," said she, weeping. "I have offered, if they would let me alone, to do anything for them they wanted; to give

them half of my rations, although I am very hungry. Ah, well! no, no, it is just the same. But what must I do for peace? They have not even pity on a poor woman in my condition! They must be more savage than wild beasts! I had so much trouble to collect those little scraps of linen. How do you think I shall do since I have no money to buy anything?" Suddenly she cried, in an accent of joy, "Oh, now you have come, La Goualeuse, I am saved! Speak to them for me! They will listen to you, surely; for they love you as much as they hate me."

The Goualeuse (the Songstress), arriving, the last of the prisoners had entered the yard.

CHAPTER XV.

GOUALEUSE AND LOUISE.

BEFORE we continue the account of this horrible scene, we must return to the Marchioness d'Harville and Madam Armand, whose conversation had been for a moment interrupted. At the ringing of the bell, the inspectress had hastened to one of the doors which opened into the prison-yard, to be ready to prevent by her presence, or calm by her authority, any tumult or quarrels that might arise among the scholars, whose passions, restrained for some time by discipline and employment, only waited the hour of idleness and recreation to be aroused and excited. Madam Armand had witnessed, in mournful silence, the cruel treatment of which Mont Saint Jean was a victim, and she had already advanced to snatch her from her tormentors, when Fleur de Marie appeared.

"She is saved!" said she to herself, and returned to the parlour where Madam d'Harville awaited her.

"But this is quite a romance that you have just related," cried the latter, without giving Madam Armand time to apologise for her absence. "What are the relations of this girl, whose beauty, language, and manners form such a strange contrast to her past degradation and present situation with the other prisoners? If she is endowed with the elevation of mind that you suppose, she must suffer much from associating with her miserable companions?"

"Everything concerning this girl is a subject of astonishment. Hardly has she been here three days, yet already she possesses a kind of influence over the other prisoners."

"In so short a time?"

"They show her not only interest, but almost respect."

"How? These unfortunates"—

"Have sometimes an instinct of singular delicacy in perceiving the noble qualities of others; yet they often hate those whose superiority they are obliged to admit."

"But they do not hate this young girl?"

"Far from that, madam; not one of them knew her before she entered here. They were at first struck with her beauty. Her features, although of rare beauty, are, it is true, veiled with a touching, unhealthy paleness. This sweet and melancholy face inspired them at first with more interest than jealousy. Then she became very quiet—another subject of astonishment for these creatures, who, for the most part, endeavour always to drown the voice of conscience by force of noise and tumult. In short, although dignified and reserved, she showed herself compassionate, which prevented her companions from being exasperated at her coldness. This is not all. A month ago there came here an unruly creature, called La Louve, so violent, audacious, and ferocious is her character. She is a girl of about twenty; tall, masculine, rather a fine face, but very coarse. We are often obliged to put her in confinement to subdue her turbulence. Only the day before yesterday she came out of the cell, very much irritated at the punishment she had just received. It was meal-time; the poor girl of whom I have spoken did not eat; she said sadly to her companions, 'Who wants my bread?' 'I,' said La Louve, first. 'I,' said a poor deformed creature afterward, called Mont Saint Jean, who serves as a laughing-stock, and sometimes, in spite of us, as a butt to the other prisoners. The girl gave her bread to the latter, to the great rage of La Louve. 'I asked you first,' cried she furiously. 'It is true, but this poor woman has more need of it than you,' answered the girl. La Louve snatched the bread from the hands of Mont Saint Jean, and began to vociferate, brandishing her knife. As she is very irascible, and very much feared, no one dared to take the part of poor Goualeuse."

"What do you call her, madam?"

"La Goualeuse. It is the name, or rather surname, under which she has been confined here. Almost all of them have similar borrowed names."

"It is very singular."

"It signifies, in their hideous slang, the Songstress; for this young girl has, they say, a very fine voice; and I readily believe it, for her tone is enchanting."

"And how did she escape from this villainous Louve?"

"Rendered still more furious by La Goualeuse's coolness, she ran towards her with an oath and uplifted knife. All the prisoners screamed with terror. Goualeuse alone regarded without fear this formidable creature. Smiling bitterly, she said, in her angelic voice, 'Oh, kill me! kill me! I desire it; but do not make me suffer much.' These words, it was reported to me, were pronounced with a simplicity so touching, that almost all the prisoners had tears in their eyes."

"I believe it," said Lady d'Harville, painfully affected.

"The worst characters," answered the inspectress, "happily have sometimes moments of reflection—a kind of return to the correct path. On hearing these words, expressed with such resignation, La Louve, touched to the heart, as she afterward said, threw her knife on the ground, trampled it under foot, and cried, 'I was wrong to threaten you, Songstress, for I am stronger than you; you were not afraid of my knife; you are courageous—I love courage; so now, if anyone attempts to hurt you, I'll defend you.'"

"What a singular character!"

"The example of La Louve increased the influence of La Goualeuse; and at present, a thing almost without a precedent, hardly any of the prisoners address her familiarly; the greater part respect her, and even offer to render her any little service that can be rendered among prisoners. I asked some of the prisoners who slept in the same room with her, what was the cause of the deference shown her. 'That's more than we can tell,' they answered; 'it is plain to be seen she is not one of our sort.' 'But who told you so?' 'No one told us; we see.' 'By what?' 'In a thousand things.' 'For instance, last night, before she went to bed, she went on her knees and said her prayers; as she prays, so La Louve says, she must have a right to pray!'"

"What a strange observation."

"These poor creatures have no sentiment of religion, yet they never utter here a sacrilegious or impious word. You will see, madam, in all our rooms a kind of altar, where the statue of the Virgin is surrounded with offerings and ornaments made by themselves. But to return to La Goualeuse. Her companions said to me, 'We see that she is not our sort, from her soft manners, her sadness, the way in which she speaks.' And then said La Louve, who was present at this conversation, 'It must be that she is not one of us; for this morning, in our sleeping room, without knowing why, we were ashamed to dress ourselves before her.'"

"What strange delicacy in the midst of so much degradation!" cried Lady d'Harville. "They have a profound sense of their degradation?"

"No one can despise them as much as they despise themselves. Among some of them, whose repentance is sincere, this original stain of vice remains indelible in their eyes, even when they find themselves in a better situation; others become insane, so much does the sense of their former aberration remain fixed and implacable. I should not be surprised if the profound sorrow of the Goualeuse proceeds from some such cause."

"If this should be so, what torture for her! a remorse which nothing can soothe!"

"Happily, madam, for the honour of the human race, this remorse occurs oftener than is supposed; avenging conscience never completely sleeps, or rather, strange thing, sometimes one would say that the spirit watches while the body sleeps. It is an observation that I made only this night again in reference to my *protégée*. Very often, when the prisoners are asleep, I make the rounds of the sleeping apartments. Your ladyship cannot imagine how much the physiognomies of these women differ in expression while they sleep. A great number of them whom I had seen during the day careless, bold, brazen, impudent, seemed completely to have changed when sleep had deprived their features of all the audacity of wickedness; for vice, alas! has its pride. Oh, what sorrowful revelations on these countenances, then dejected, melancholy, and sad! What involuntary starts! What mournful sighs torn from them by a dream, doubtless impressed with an inexorable reality! I spoke to you just now, madam, of this girl called La Louve. About fifteen days ago she insulted me brutally before all the prisoners. I shrugged my shoulders; my indifference but exasperated her. Then she thought to wound me by uttering something disgraceful concerning my mother, whom she had often seen here on a visit to me. Ah, how horrid! I acknowledge, stupid as this attack was, she hurt me. La Louve saw it, and triumphed. That night I went to make an inspection in the sleeping apartment; I reached the bed of La Louve, who was to be put in the cell next morning; I was struck with the sweetness of her face, compared with the hard and insolent expression which was habitual to her; her features seemed supplicating, full of sadness and contrition; her lips were half-open, her breathing oppressed; finally, a thing which appeared to me incredible, for I thought it impossible, tears—tears fell from her eyes. I looked at her in silence for some moments, when I heard her pronounce these words, 'Pardon! pardon her, mother!' I listened more attentively, but all that I could hear was my name, Madam Armand, pronounced with a sigh."

"She repented, during her sleep, of having abused your mother?"

"I thought so—and it made me less severe."

"And the next day, did she express any regret for her past conduct?"

"None; she showed herself as wild as ever."

"But, madam, you must need great courage, much strength of mind, not to recoil before the unpleasantness of a task which brings such rare returns!"

"The consciousness of fulfilling a duty sustains and encourages me; besides, sometimes, one is recompensed by some happy discovery."

"No matter; women like you, madam, are seldom to be found."

"No, no; I assure you what I do others do, and with more success and intelligence

than me. One of the inspectresses of the other quarter of Saint Lazare, destined for those accused of other crimes, will interest you much more. She related to me the arrival, this morning, of a young girl, accused of infanticide. Never have I heard anything more touching. The father of the poor unfortunate has become insane from grief, on learning the shame of his child. It appears that nothing could be more frightful than the poverty of this family, who lived in a wretched garret in the Rue du Temple!"

"The Rue du Temple!" cried Madam d'Harville, astonished. "What is the name of the family?"

"Morel. Her name is Louise Morel."

"This poor family has been recommended to me," said Clemence, blushing, "but I was far from expecting to hear such terrible news —and Louise Morel"—

"Says she is innocent; she swears her child was dead; and her words have the accent of truth. Since you have interested yourself in her family, if you would have the kindness to see her, this mark of your goodness would calm her despair, which they say is fearful."

"Certainly, I will see her, and the Goualeuse also; for all you tell me about this poor girl affects me sincerely. But what must I do to obtain her liberty? Then I will find her a place; I will take charge of her."

"With the relations your ladyship has, it will be very easy for you to get her discharge to-day or to-morrow; it depends entirely on the prefect of the police. The recommendation of a person of quality would be decisive with him. But I have wandered far, madam, from the observation that I made on the slumber of the Goualeuse. On this subject, I must confess, that I should not be astonished that, to the sentiments of profound grief for her first fault, is joined another sorrow, not less cruel."

"What do you mean to say, madam?"

"Perhaps I am deceived; but I should not be astonished that this young girl, emancipated, as it were, from the degradation into which she was first plunged, had experienced perhaps a virtuous love, which was at once her happiness and misery."

"Why do you think so?"

"The obstinate silence she keeps as to the place where she passed the three months which followed her departure from the City, makes me think that she fears to be reclaimed by the persons with whom, perhaps, she found a refuge."

"And why this fear?"

"Because she would then have to avow a past life, of which they are doubtless ignorant."

"Really, this peasant's dress"—

"Besides, another circumstance has strengthened my suspicions. Last night, as I made my inspection, I drew near the Goualeuse's bed; she slept profoundly; her face was calm and serene; her thick flaxen hair, half escaping from under her cap, fell in profusion on her neck and shoulders. She had her small hands clasped over her bosom, as if she had fallen asleep while in the act of prayer. I contemplated with compassion this angelic countenance, when, in a low voice, and in a tone at once respectful, sorrowful, and endearing, she pronounced a name."

"And this name?"

After a moment's silence, Madam Armand said gravely, "Although I consider as sacred that which one hears another express in their sleep, you interest yourself so generously in this unfortunate, madam, that I can confide to you this secret. The name was Rudolph."

"Rudolph!" cried Madam d'Harville, thinking of the prince. Then, reflecting that, after all, the Grand Duke of Gerolstein could have no connection with the Rudolph of poor Goualeuse, she said to the inspectress, who seemed astonished at her exclamation, "this name surprised me, madam, for by a singular chance, one of my relations bears it also; but all you have told me of the Goualeuse interests me more and more. Can I not see her to-day? Now?"

"Yes, madam, I will go, if you wish, to find her. I can also ask about Louise Morel, who is in the other part of the prison."

"I shall be much obliged," answered Madam d'Harville, and she remained alone.

"It is singular," said she; "I cannot account for the strange impression which the name of Rudolph caused me. Truly, I am mad! between *him* and such a creature, what relations can exist?" Then, after a pause, she added, "He was right! how much all this interests me! the mind, the heart, expands when they are applied to such noble occupations! As he says, it seems as if one participated in the power of Providence, when relieving those who are deserving. And these excursions in a world of whose existence we have no suspicion, are so interesting, so *amusing*, as *he* was pleased to say! What romance could give me such touching emotions, excite to this point my curiosity! This poor Goualeuse, for example, inspires me with profound pity; and this unfortunate daughter of the artisan, whom the prince had so generously relieved in my name! Poor people! their frightful misery served as a pretext to save me. I have escaped shame, death, perhaps, by a hypocritical falsehood; this deceit oppresses me; but I will expatiate it by force of benefactions. This will be easy! it is so sweet to follow the noble counsels of Rudolph! it is rather to love than to obey him! Oh! I feel it—I know it. I experience a sweet delight in acting through him; for I love him. Oh, yes, I love him! yet he will be for ever ignorant of this eternal passion of my life." While Madam d'Harville awaits the Goualeuse, we will return to the prison-yard.

CHAPTER XVI.

WOLF AND LAMB.

FLEUR DE MARIE, the Songstress, wore the blue dress and black cap of the prisoners; but even in this common costume, she was charming. Yet since she was carried off from the farm of Bouqueval, her features were much altered; her natural paleness, slightly tinted with rose, was now as dead as the whitest alabaster; her expression had also changed; it had now assumed a kind of dignified sadness. Fleur de Marie knew that to endure courageously the grievous sacrifices of expiation is almost to obtain a kind of regeneration.

"Ask their pardon for me, La Goualeuse," said Mont Saint Jean. "See how they drag in the dirt all that I had collected with so much trouble; what good can it do them?"

Fleur de Marie did not say a word, but she began actively to collect, one by one, from under the feet of the prisoners, all the rags she could find. One of the prisoners retaining mischievously under her foot a piece of coarse muslin, Fleur de Marie stooping, raised her enchanting face towards this woman, and said, in her sweet voice, "I beg you to let me take this, in the name of the poor weeping woman."

The prisoner withdrew her foot. The muslin was saved, as well as all the other rags, which the Goualeuse secured piece by piece. There remained only one little cap, which two of them were contending for, laughing.

Fleur de Marie said to them, "Come, be good now, and give her that little cap."

"My eye! is it for a baby harlequin, this cap? made of gray stuff, with peaks of green and black fustian, and a bedtick lining." This description of the cap was received with shouts of laughter.

"Laugh at it as much as you please, but give it to me," said Mont Saint Jean; "don't drag it in the gutter as you did the rest. I beg your pardon, La Goualeuse, for having made you soil your hands for me," added she, in a grateful voice.

"Give me the harlequin cap?" said La Louve, who caught it, and shook it in the air as a trophy.

"I entreat you to give it to me?" said La Goualeuse.

"No; because you will give it to Mont Saint Jean."

"Certainly!"

"Ah! Bah! such a fag! its not worth the trouble."

"It is because Mont Saint Jean has nothing but rags to dress her child with, that you should have pity on her, La Louve," said Fleur de Marie, sadly, extending her hand towards the cap.

"You shan't have it!" answered La Louve, brutally; "must one always give up to you, because you are the weakest? You take advantage of this!"

"Where would be the merit of giving it to me if I were the strongest?" answered La Goualeuse, with a smile full of grace.

"No, no, you wish to twist me about again with your little soft voice; you shan't have it!"

"Come, now, La Louve, don't be naughty."

"Leave me alone, you tire me."

"I entreat you!"

"Stop! don't make me angry—I have said no, and no it is!" cried La Louve, very much irritated.

"Have pity upon her; see how she weeps?"

"What is that to me? so much the worse for her! she is our target."

"That's true, that's true, don't give it up," murmured several of the prisoners, carried away by the example of La Louve."

"You are right—so much the worse for her!" said Fleur de Marie, with bitterness; "she is your butt; she ought to be resigned to it; her groans amuse you, her tears make you laugh; you must pass the time in some way! if you should kill her on the spot, she has no right to say anything. You are right, La Louve—it is just! this poor woman has done no harm; she cannot defend herself; she is one against the whole—you overpower her—that is very brave and very generous."

"Are we cowards, then?" cried La Louve, carried away by the violence of her character, and by her impatience of all contradiction; "will you answer? are we cowards, eh?" said she, more and more irritated.

Murmurs, very threatening for the Goualeuse, began to be heard. The offended prisoners approached and surrounded her, vociferating, forgetting or revolting against the ascendancy that the young girl had until then obtained over them.

"She calls us cowards! By what right does she scold us? Is it because she is greater than we are? We have been too good to her, and now she wants to put on airs with us. If we choose to torment Mont Saint Jean, what has she got to say about it? Since it is so, you shall be worse beaten than before, do you hear, Mont Saint Jean?"

"Hold, here is one to begin with," said one of them, giving her a blow. "And if you meddle with what don't concern you, La Goualeuse, we'll treat you in the same way."

"Yes, yes!"

"This isn't all!" cried La Louve; "La Goualeuse must ask our pardon for having called us cowards! If not, and we let her go on, she'll finish by eating us up; we are very stupid not to see that! She must ask our pardon. On her knee! on both knees! or we'll treat her like Mont Saint Jean, her *protégée*. On your knees—on your knees! Oh! we are cowards, are we?"

Fleur de Marie was not alarmed at these furious cries; she let the storm rage, but as soon as she could be heard, casting a calm and melancholy glance around her, she re-

plied to La Louve, who vociferated anew, "Dare to repeat that we are cowards!"

"You? no, no; it is this poor woman whose clothes you have torn, whom you have beaten, dragged in the mire, who is a coward! Do you not see how she weeps, how she trembles in looking at you? it is she who is a coward, since she is afraid of you."

The discernment of Fleur de Marie served her perfectly. She might have invoked justice, and duty, to disarm the stupid and brutal conduct of the prisoners, they would not have listened to her; but in addressing them with this sentiment of natural generosity, which is never extinct even in the most contemptible natures, she awoke a feeling of pity.

La Louve and her companions still murmured; Fleur de Marie continued: "Your target does not deserve compassion, you say; but her child deserves it. Alas! does it not feel the blows given to the mother? When she cries for mercy, it is not for her self, it is for her child! When she asks for some of your bread, if you have too much, because she has more hunger than usual, it is not for her, but for her child! When she begs you, with tears in her eyes, to spare these rags, which she has had so much trouble to collect, it is not for her, but her child! This poor little cap, which you have made so much fun of, is laughable, perhaps; yet only to look at it, makes me feel like weeping. I avow it. Laugh at us both, Mont Saint Jean and me, if you will." The prisoners did not laugh. La Louve even looked sadly at the little cap she held in her hand. "Come now!" continued Fleur de Marie, wiping her eyes with the back of her white and delicate hand; "I know you are not so hard. You torment Mont Saint Jean from want of employment, not from cruelty. But you forget that she has her child. Could she hold it in her arms that it should protect her, not only would you not strike her, for fear of hurting the poor innocent, but if it was cold you would give to its mother all you could to cover it, eh, La Louve?"

"It is true; who would not pity a child?"

"It is very plain."

"If it was hungry you would take the bread out of your own mouth; would you not, La Louve?"

"Yes, and willingly. I am no worse than others."

"Nor we neither."

"A poor little innocent!"

"Who would have a heart to hurt it?"

"Must be a monster!"

"No hearts!"

"Wild beasts!"

"I told you truly," said Fleur de Marie, "that you were not cruel. You are kind; your error is not reflecting that Mont Saint Jean deserves as much compassion as though she had her child in her arms, that's all."

"That's all!" cried La Louve, with warmth; "no; that's not all. You were right, La Goualeuse; we were cowards, and you were brave in daring to tell us so; and you are brave in not trembling after having told us. You see, we were right in constantly insisting that *you were not one of us*—it must always come to that. It vexes me; but so it is. We were all wrong just now. You were pluckier than the whole gang of us!"

"That's true; this little blonde must have had courage, to tell us the truth right in our faces."

"After all, it is true: when we strike Mont Saint Jean, we do strike her child."

"I didn't think of that."

"Nor I either."

"But La Goualeuse thinks of everything."

"And to strike a child is shameful!"

"There isn't one of us capable of doing it."

Nothing is more easily moved than popular passions—nothing more abrupt and rapid, than the return from evil to good and from good to evil. The few simple and touching words from Fleur de Marie had caused a sudden reaction in favour of Mont Saint Jean, who wept gently.

Suddenly, La Louve, violent and hasty in everything, took the little cap she held in her hand, made a kind of purse of it, fumbled in her pocket, drew out twenty sous, threw them into the cap, and cried, presenting it to her companions, "I give twenty sous towards buying baby-linen for Mont Saint Jean. We'll cut it all out and sew it ourselves, so that the making up shan't cost a copper!"

"Yes, yes."

"That's it! let us club together."

"I'm agreed!"

"Famous idea!"

"Poor woman!"

"She is as ugly as a monster; but she is a mother, like anyone else."

"I give ten sous."

"I thirty."

"I twenty.'

"I four sous; got no more."

"I have nothing; but I will sell my ration for to-morrow—who'll buy?"

"I," said La Louve; "I put ten sous for you; but you'll keep your ration, and Mont Saint Jean's baby shall be togged out like a princess."

To express the surprise and joy of Mont Saint Jean would be impossible: her grotesque and ugly visage became almost touching. Happiness and gratitude beamed there.

Fleur de Marie was also very happy, although she had been obliged to say to La Louve, when she held the little cap towards her, "I have no money; but I will work as much as you like."

"Oh! my good little angel from Paradise," cried Mont Saint Jean, falling at the feet of La Goualeuse, and trying to take her hand to kiss it, "What is it I have done that you should be so charitable towards me, and all these *ladies* also? Is it possible, my good

angel? For my child—everything that I want! Who could have believed it? I shall go off my head, I am sure. Why, I was just now the scapegoat of every one! In a moment, because you said something in your dear little voice of a seraph, you turn them from evil to good; and now they love me, and I love them. They are so good! I was wrong to get angry. Wasn't I a fool, and unjust, and ungrateful? All they have done to me was only for a laugh: they didn't wish me any harm—it was for my good; for here is the proof. Why, now, if they were to kill me on the spot, I would not say a word."

"We have eighty-four francs and seven sous," said La Louve, having finished counting the money she had collected. "Who will be treasurer? Mustn't give it to Mont Saint Jean; she is too stupid."

"Let Goualeuse take charge of the money," they all cried unanimously.

"If you listen to me," said Fleur de Marie, "you will beg Madame Armand, the inspectress, to take charge of this sum, and make the necessary purchases; and then she will know the good action you have done, and, perhaps, will ask to have your time reduced. Well, La Louve," added she, taking her companion by the arm, "don't you now feel happier than when you were casting to the winds, just now, the poor rags of Mont Saint Jean?"

La Louve at first did not answer. To the generous warmth which had for a moment animated her features had succeeded a kind of savage defiance.

"Fleur de Marie looked at her with surprise, not understanding this sudden change.

"La Goualeuse, come; I want to talk to you," said La Louve, in a sullen manner; and leaving the other prisoners, she led Fleur de Marie near to the basin which was in the centre of the court. La Louve and her companion seated themselves, isolated from the rest of their companions.

The winter's sun shed its pale rays upon them, the blue sky was partially obscured by white and fleecy clouds: some birds, deceived by the mildness of the atmosphere, were warbling in the black branches of the large chestnut-trees in the court; two or three sparrows, bolder than the rest, came to drink and to bathe in a little brook which flowed from the fountain; the stone margin was covered with green moss, and here and there from the insterstices rose some tufts of green herbs, which the frost had spared. This description of the prison basin may seem trifling, but Fleur de Marie lost not one of these details; with her eyes fixed sadly on the clouds as they broke the azure of the sky, or reflected the golden rays of the sun, she thought, with a sigh, of the magnificence of nature, which she much loved, admired poetically, and of which she was deprived.

"What do you wish to say to me?" asked La Goualeuse of her companion, who, seated alongside of her, remained sombre and silent.

"It is necessary that we have a settlement," cried La Louve, harshly, "this can't go on."

"I don't understand you, La Louve."

"Just now, in the court, I said to myself, 'I will not yield to La Goualeuse,' and yet I have again given way to you."

"But"—

"I tell you this can't last so."

"What have you against me, La Louve?"

"Why, I am no longer the same since your arrival; no, I have no more courage, strength, or hardihood."

Interrupting herself, she pushed up the sleeve of her dress, and showed to La Goualeuse her strong white arm, pointing out to her, pricked in with indelible ink, a poniard half plunged in a red heart; over this emblem were these words:

"Death to Dastards!
MARTIAL.
For Life!"

"Do you see that?" cried La Louve.

"Yes; it makes me afraid," said La Goualeuse, turning away her head.

"When Martial, my lover, wrote this with a red-hot needle, he thought me brave; if he knew my conduct for three days past, he would drive his knife in my body as this poniard is planted in this heart; and he would be right, for he has written there '*Death to Dastards*,' and I am one."

"What have you done cowardly?"

"Everything."

"Do you regret what you have done just now?"

"Yes!"

"I do not believe you."

"I tell you that I regret it, for it is another proof of the power you have over us all. Did you not hear what Mont Saint Jean said when she was on her knees to thank you?"

"What did she say?"

"She said, in speaking of us, that with nothing you turn us from evil to good. I could have strangled her when she said that, for, to our shame, it is true. Yes, in a moment, you change us from black to white: we listen to you, we give way to our impulses, and we are your dupes."

"My dupe—because you have generously assisted this poor woman!"

"It shall not be said," cried La Louve, "that a little girl like you can trample me under foot."

"I! how?"

"Do I know how? You come here—you commence by offending me."

"Offend you?"

"Yes: you ask who wants your bread; I answer first 'I!' Mont Saint Jean only asks for it afterwards, and you give her the preference. Furious at this, I rush on you with my knife raised."

"And I said to you, 'Kill me if you will,

but do not make me suffer too much,'" answered La Goualeuse: "that was all."

"That was all! Yes, that was all! and yet, these words alone caused the knife to fall from my hands; made me ask pardon from you, who had offended me. Is it natural? Why, when I return to my senses, I pity myself. And the night when you arrived here, when you knelt to say your prayers, why, instead of laughing at you and arousing the whole company — why was it that I said, 'Leave her alone; she prays because she has the right to do so.' And, the next morning, why were we all ashamed to dress before you?"

"I do not know, La Louve."

"Really!" said this violent creature, with irony, "you don't know! It is, doubtless, as we have told you sometimes in jest, that you are of another family than ours. Perhaps you believe that?"

"I never said so."

"You never said so, but you act so."

"I pray you to listen to me."

"No! it has been of no service for me to listen to you—to look at you. Up to now I have never envied anyone. Well, two or three times I have surprised myself in envying—can anything be more sneaking? — in envying your face—like the Holy Virgin's! your soft, sad manner! Yes, I have envied even your fair hair, and your blue eyes. I—who have always detested fair faces, since I am a brunette—wish to resemble you!"

"No, La Louve! me?"

"A week ago I should have left my mark on anyone who would have dared to tell me this. However, I do not envy you your lot; you are as sad as a Magdalen. Is it natural? speak?"

"How can you expect me to account to you for the impressions I cause?"

"Oh, you know well enough what you do with your touch-me-not air."

"But what design can I have?"

"Do you think I know? It is exactly because I cannot understand all this that I suspect you. There is another thing: until now I have always been gay or angry—but never a thinker; and you have made me think. Yes, there are some words you say which, in spite of me, have touched my heart and make me think all manner of sad things."

"I am sorry to have made you sad, La Louve; but I do not remember to have said any"—

"Oh!" cried La Louve; "what you do is often as touching as what you say! You are so malignant!"

"Do not be angry, La Louve! explain yourself."

"Yesterday, in the workshop, I saw you plainly. You had your eyes down, fixed on your work; a tear fell on your hand; you looked at it for a moment, and then you carried your hand to your lips, as if to kiss away this tear; is it not true?"

"It is true," said La Goualeuse, blushing.

"That has the appearance of nothing! But, at that moment you looked so unhappy—so unhappy, that I felt myself all heartache—every feeling stirred up. Say now? do you think this is amusing? I have always been as hard as a rock about everything concerning myself. No one can boast of ever having seen me weep; and it must be that in looking at your little face I should feel cowardice at my heart! Yes, for all that is pure cowardice; and the proof is, that for three days I have not dared to write to Martial, my conscience accuses me so much. Yes, keeping company with you has weakened my character; it must stop; I have enough of it; I wish to remain as I am, and not have people laugh at me."

"Why should they laugh at you?"

"Because they would see me acting a stupid, good-natured part, who made them all tremble here! No, no; I am twenty; I am as handsome as you, in my style; I am wicked; I am feared, and that's what I want. I laugh at the rest. Perish all who say the contrary?"

"You are angry with me, La Louve?"

"Yes, you are for me a bad acquaintance; if this is continued, in fifteen days, instead of being called Wolf, they will call me Sheep. Thank you! its not me they'll baptise so. Martial would kill me. In short, I want none of your company; I am going to ask to be put in another hall; if they refuse, I'll flare up so that they will put me in the dungeon until my time is out. That's what I have to say to you, La Goualeuse."

"I assure you, La Louve," said Fleur de Marie, "that you feel an interest in me, not because you are soft, but because you are generous—brave hearts alone feel the misfortunes of others."

"There is neither generosity nor courage in this," said La Louve, brutally; "it is cowardice. Besides, I do not wish you to tell me that I am touched—softened; it is not true."

"I will not say so any more, La Louve; but since you have shown some interest for me, you will let me be grateful to you for it, will you not?"

"To-night I shall be in another hall from you, or alone in the dungeon; and soon I shall be away from here."

"And where will you go?"

"Home; Rue Pierre Lescot. I have my own furnished room."

"And Martial!" said La Goualeuse, who hoped to continue the conversation by speaking of an object interesting to her; "you'll be very happy to see him?"

"Yes; oh, yes!" answered she. "When I was arrested he was recovering from sickness—a fever which he had, because he is always on the water. For sixteen or seventeen nights I never left him for a moment. I sold half that I possessed to pay for a doctor and medicines. I can boast of it; and I do boast of

it. If my man lives, he owes it to me. I yesterday burned a candle before the Virgin for him. It is foolish; but never mind, some very good effects have proceeded from this for he is convalescent."

"Where is he now? what does he do?"

"He lives near the Asnières Bridge on the shore."

"On the shore?"

"Yes, with his family in a solitary house. He is always warring with the river-keepers; and when once he is in his boat, with his double-barrelled gun, its no good to approach him!" said La Louve, proudly.

"What is his trade?"

"He fishes by stealth at night; his father had some *misunderstanding* with justice. He has still a mother, two sisters, and a brother. It would be better for him not to have such a brother, for he is a scoundrel, who will be guillotined one of these days; his sisters also. However, never mind, their necks belong to themselves."

"Where did you first meet Martial?"

"In Paris. He wished to learn the trade of a locksmith; a fine trade, always red-hot iron and fire around one, and danger, too; that suited him, but, like me, he had a bad head—couldn't agree with the slow-pokes: so he returned to his family, and began to maraud on the river. He came to Paris to see me, and I went to see him at Asnières; it is very near; but if it had been farther, I should have gone, even if I had been obliged to go on my hands and knees."

"You will be very happy to go to the country, you, La Louve," said the Goualeuse, sighing; "above all, if you love, as I do, to walk in the fields."

"I prefer to walk in the woods—in the large forests, with Martial!"

"In forests? are you not afraid?"

"Afraid! Is a wolf afraid? The thicker and darker the forest, the more I like it. A lonely hut, where I should live with Martial, who should be a poacher; to go with him at night, to set traps for the game; and then, if the guards come to arrest us, to fire on them, hiding in the bushes—ah! that's what I like!"

"You have lived in a forest, La Louve?"

"Never."

"Who gave you such ideas?"

"Martial. He was a poacher in Rambouillet Wood. About a year ago he was *looked upon* as having fired upon a guard who had fired upon him—villain of a guard! It was not proved in court, but Martial was obliged to leave. So he then came to Paris to learn a trade; as I said, he left and went to maraud on the river; it is less slavish. But he always regrets the woods, and will return there some day or other."

"And, La Louve, where are your parents?"

"Do you think I know!"

"Is it a long time since you have seen them?"

"I do not know if they are dead or alive."

Fleur de Marie, although plunged very young into an atmosphere of corruption, had since respired an air so pure, that she experienced a painful oppression at the horrid story of La Louve. Suppressing the emotion which the sad confession of her companion had caused her, she said to her, timidly, "Listen to me without being angry."

"Come, say on; I hope I have talked enough; but, in truth, all the same, since it is the last time we shall converse together."

"Are you happy, La Louve?"

"What do you mean?"

"With the life you lead?"

"Here at Saint Lazare?"

"No; at your home, when you are free."

"Yes, I am happy."

"Always?"

"Always."

"You would not change your lot for any other?"

"For what other? There's no other lot for me."

"Tell me, La Louve," continued Fleur de Marie, after a moment's silence, "do you not sometimes like to build castles in the air here in prison? It is so amusing."

"Castles in the air?"

"About Martial?"

"Martial!"

"Yes."

"Ma foi, I never have."

"Let me build one for you and Martial?"

"What's the use?"

"To pass the time."

"Well, let us see this castle."

"Just imagine, for example, that by chance you should meet some one who should say to you, 'Abandoned by your father and mother, your childhood has been surrounded by bad examples; that you must be pitied as much as blamed for having become'"—

"Having become what?"

"What you and I—have become," answered the Goualeuse, in a soft voice. "Suppose this person were to say to you, 'You love Martial—he loves you; leave your present mode of life, and become his wife.'"

La Louve shrugged her shoulders.

"Do you think he would take me for his wife?"

"Except his poaching, has he ever committed any other culpable action?"

"No; he is a poacher on the river, as he was in the woods; and he is right. Are not fish, like game, the property of those who can take them? Where is the mark of their owner?"

"Well, suppose, having renounced this, he wishes to become an honest man; suppose that he inspires, by the frankness of his good resolutions, enough confidence in an unknown benefactor to be given a place—as gamekeeper, for instance. To a poacher, it would be to his liking. It is the same trade, only lawful."

"Lord! yes; it is life in the woods."

"Only this place would be given to him on the sole condition that he would marry you and take you with him."

"I go with Martial?"

"Yes; you would be so happy, you say, to live together in a forest. Would you not like better, instead of a miserable poacher's hut, where you would hide yourselves like criminals, to have a nice little cottage, of which you should be the active, industrious housekeeper?"

"You make fun of me. Can this be possible?"

"Who knows? though it is only a castle."

"Ah, true; very well."

"I say, La Louve, it seems to me I already see you established in your cottage in the forest, with your husband, and two or three children. What happiness!"

"Children! Martial!" cried La Louve; "oh, yes, they would be *proudly* loved."

"How much company they would be for you in your solitude. Then, when they began to grow up, they could render you some assistance. The smallest could pick up the dead branches for your fire; the largest could drive to pasture the cow which has been given to your husband for his activity; for, having been a poacher himself, he would make all the better gamekeeper."

"Just so; that's true. Ah, these castles in the air are amusing. Tell me some more, La Goualeuse."

"They will be very much pleased with your husband. You will receive from his master some presents; a nice garden. But marry; you will have to work, La Louve, from morning to night."

"Oh, if that was all, once along with Martial, work wouldn't make me afraid. I have strong arms."

"And you would have enough to occupy them, I answer for it. There is so much to do. There are the meals to prepare, clothes to mend; one day the washing, another day baking, or the house to clean from top to bottom; so that the other gamekeepers would say, 'Oh, there is not a housekeeper like Martial's wife; from cellar to garret her house is as nice as a new pin; and the children always so neat and clean. It is because she is so industrious.'"

"Tell me, La Goualeuse, is it true I would be called Madam Martial?"

"It is a great deal better than to be called La Louve, is it not?"

"Certainly; I prefer the name of any man to the name of a beast. But, bah! bah! wolf I am born, and wolf I shall die."

"Who knows? Do not recoil from a hard but honest life that brings happiness. So, work would not alarm you?"

"Oh, no."

"And then, besides, it is not all labour; there are moments of repose. In the winter evenings, while your children are asleep, and your husband smoking his pipe, cleaning his gun, or caressing his dogs, you could have a nice quiet time."

"Bah! bah! a quiet time; sit with my arms folded. Goodness, no; I would prefer to mend the family linen in the evening, in the chimney corner; that is not so tiresome. The days are so short in winter."

At the words of Fleur de Marie, La Louve forgot more and more of the present in these dreams of the future. La Louve did not conceal the wild tastes with which her lover had inspired her. Fleur de Marie had thought, with reason, that if her companion would suffer herself to be sufficiently moved at this picture of a rough, poor, and solitary life, to ardently desire to live such a one, this woman would deserve interest and pity.

Enchanted at seeing her companion listen with curiosity, La Goualeuse continued, smiling; "And, then you see, *Madam Martial*—let me call you so, what do you care?"

"On the contrary, it flatters me," said La Louve, shrugging her shoulders, but smiling. "What folly—to play *Madam!* What children we are! Never mind, go on—it is amusing. You said, then"—

"I say, Madam Martial, that in speaking of your mode of living in winter, in the woods, we only think of the worst part of the season."

"No, that is not the worst. To hear the wind whistle at night in the forest, and from time to time the wolves howl, far off—far off; I would not find it tiresome, not I, if I am alongside of a good fire, with my man and my brats; or even all alone with my children, while he is gone to make his rounds. Oh! a gun doesn't frighten me. If I had my children to defend, I'd be good then. La Louve would take good care of her cubs!"

"Oh! I believe you—you are very brave; but coward me prefers spring to winter. Oh! the spring, Madam Martial, the spring! when the leaves burst forth; when the pretty wood-flowers blossom, which smell so good—so good, that the air is perfumed. Then it is that your children will tumble gaily on the new grass, and the forest will become so thick and bushy, that your house can hardly be seen for the foliage; I think I can see it from here. There is a bower before the door that your husband has planted, which shades the seat of turf where he sleeps during the heat of the day, while you go and come, and tell the children not to wake their father. I do not know if you have remarked it, but at noon, in the middle of summer, it is as silent in the woods as during the night. Not a leaf stirs, not a bird is heard to sing."

"That is true," repeated La Louve, mechanically, who, forgetting more and more the reality, believed almost that she saw displayed before her eyes the smiling pictures described by the poetic imagination of Fleur de Marie, instinctively a lover of the beauties of nature

Delighted with the profound attention which her companion lent her, she continued, allowing herself to be carried away by the charm of the thoughts she evoked. "There is one thing that I like almost as well as the silence of the woods; it is the patter of the large drops of rain in the summer, falling on the leaves; do you like this also?"

"Oh, yes; I like also, very much, the summer rain."

"When the trees, moss, and grass are all well woistened, what a fine fresh odour? And then, how the sun, peeping through the trees, makes all the drops of water sparkle which hang from the leaves after the shower. Have you remarked this also?"

"Yes, but I didn't remember it till you told it me. How droll it is! you tell it so well, La Goualeuse, that one seems to see everything as you speak; and—I do not know how to explain this to you; but, what you have said —smells good—is refreshing—like the summer rain, of which you spoke."

Thus, like the beautiful and the good, poetry is often contagious. La Louve's brutal and savage nature had to submit in everything to the influence of Fleur de Marie. She added, smiling, "We must not believe that we are alone in loving the summer rain. How happy the birds are! how they shake their wings in warbling joyously—not more joyously, however, than your children, free, gay, and lively as they are: see how, at the close of day, the youngest runs through the woods to meet their brother, who brings the heifers from the pasture; they soon heard the tinkling of their bells."

"Why, La Goualeuse, it seem to me that I can see the smallest, yet the boldest, who has been placed by his brother, who sustains him, astride the back of one of the cows."

"And one would say that the poor beast knew what burden she was bearing, she walks with so much precaution."

"But now it is supper-time: your eldest, while the cattle were grazing, has amused himself in filling a basket for you with wild strawberries, which he has brought covered with violets."

"Strawberries and violets—oh! that must be a a balm. But where the mischief do you get such ideas, La Goualeuse?"

"In the woods, where the strawberries ripen, where the violets bloom; it is only to look and collect, Madam Martial. But let us speak of the housekeeping: it is night, you must milk your cows, prepare the supper under the arbour, for you hear your husband's dogs bark, and soon the voice of their master, who, tired as he is, comes home singing. And why should he not sing, when, on a fine summer evening, with a contented mind, he regains his house, where a good wife and fine children await him?"

"True, one could not do otherwise than sing," said La Louve, becoming more and more thoughtful.

"At least, if one does not weep from joy," continued Fleur de Marie, herself affected. "And such tears are as sweet as songs. And then, when night has closed in, what happiness to remain under the arbour, to enjoy the serenity of a fine evening; to breathe the perfume of the forest; to hear the children prattle; to look at the stars! Then the heart is so full that it must be relieved by prayer. How not thank Him to whom one owes the freshness of the night, the perfume of the woods, the sweet light of the starry heavens? After these thanks or this prayer, you go to sleep peacefully until the morning, and then again you thank the Creator; for this poor, industrious, but calm and honest life, is that of every day."

"Of every day!" repeated La Louve, her head on her bosom, her eyes fixed, her breathing oppressed; "for it is true, God is good to give us the power to live happy on so little."

"Well, now, say," continued Fleur de Marie, gently, "say, ought he not be blessed and thanked next to Heaven, who would give you this peaceful and industrious life, instead of the miserable one you lead in the mud in the streets of Paris?"

The word "Paris" called La Louve to the reality.

A strange phenomenon had just been occuring in the mind, the soul of this creature. A natural picture of a humble working life, a simple recital, now lighted up by the soft glimmerings of a domestic fireside, gilded by some joyous rays of the sun, refreshed by the gentle winds of the forest, or perfumed by the odour of wild flowers, had made on La Louve an impression more profound, more striking, than all the exhortations of transcendent morality could have effected. Yes, as Fleur de Marie spoke, La Louve had yearned to be an indefatigable housekeeper, an honest wife, a pious and devoted mother. To inspire, even for a moment, a violent, immoral, degraded woman, with a love of family, the respect of duty, the desire to labour, gratitude towards the Creator, and that by promising her merely what God gives to all, the sun of Heaven and the shade of the forest, what man owes to the sweat of his brow, bread and shelter—was it not a triumph for Fleur de Marie? Would the moralist the most severe, the preacher the most fulminating, have obtained more by their menacing threats of every vengeance, human and Divine?

The angry feelings showed by La Louve when she awoke from her dream to the reality, showed the effects or influence of the words of her companion. The more her regrets were bitter on awakening to the sense of her horrible position, the more the triumph of the Goualeuse was manifest.

After a moment of silent reflection, La Louve suddenly raised her head, passed her hand over her face, and arose from her seat, threatening and angry.

"You see that I had reason to avoid you, and not listen to you, because it only does me harm? Why have you talked in this way to me? to laugh at me? to torment me? And because I was fool enough to tell you that I would like to live in a forest with Martial? But who are you, then? Why do you turn my head in this way? You do not know what you have done, unlucky girl? Now, in spite of myself, I shall always be thinking of that wood, that house, those children, all that happiness, which I never shall have—never—never! And if I cannot forget what you have told me, my life will be a torment, a hell; and all by your fault—yes, by your fault!"

"So much the better! oh! so much the better!" said Fleur de Marie.

"You dare to say so?" cried La Louve, with threatening eyes.

"Yes, so much the better; for if your miserable mode of living from henceforth proves a hell, you will prefer that of which I have spoken."

"And what good for me to prefer it, since I cannot enjoy it? why regret being a girl of the streets, since I must die one?" cried La Louve, more and more irritated, seizing hold of the small hand of Fleur de Marie. "Answer—answer! Why have you made me wish for a life I cannot have?"

"To wish for an honest and industrious life is to be worthy of such a life, I have told you," answered Fleur de Marie, without seeking to disengage her hand.

"Well, what then, when I shall be worthy? what does it prove? how advance me?"

"To see realised that which you regard as a dream," said Fleur de Marie, in a voice so serious and convincing that La Louve, again overpowered, abandoned the hand of La Goualeuse, and remained struck with astonishment. "Listen to me, La Louve," added Marie, in a voice full of compassion; "do not think me so cruel as to awaken in you these thoughts, these hopes, if I were not sure, in making you ashamed of your present condition, to give you the means to escape from it."

"You cannot do that!"

"I—no; but some one who is good, great, almost all-powerful."

"All-powerful?"

"Listen again, La Louve. Three months since, like you, I was a poor, lost, abandoned creature. One day, he, of whom I speak with tears of gratitude"—Fleur de Marie wiped her tears—"came to me; he was not afraid, debased, and despised although I was, to speak to me words of consolation—the first I ever heard! I told him my sufferings, misery, and shame, without concealing anything, just as you have now related to me your life, La Louve. After having listened to me with kindness, he did not blame—but pitied me; he did not deride me for my degradation, but extolled the happy and peaceful life of the country."

"Like you just now."

"Then my situation appeared the more frightful, as the possible future which he pointed out seemed to me more enchanting."

"Like me also!"

"Yes; and like you I said, 'What good, alas! to show this Paradise to me who am condemned to a hell upon earth?' But I was wrong to despair; for he of whom I speak is sovereignly just, sovereignly good, and incapable of causing a false hope to shine in the eyes of a poor creature who asked neither pity, nor hope, nor happiness from anyone."

"And what did he do for you?"

"He treated me like a sick child; I was, like you, plunged in air corrupt, he sent me to respire a salubrious and vivifying atmosphere; I lived also among hideous and criminal beings; he confided me to beings made after his own image, who have purified my soul, elevated my mind; for, to all those he loves and respects, he gives a spark of his celestial intelligence. Yes, if my words move you, La Louve, if my tears cause your tears to flow, it is his mind, his thoughts inspire me! if I speak to you of a future more happy, which you will obtain by repentance, it is because I can promise you this future in his name, although he is now ignorant of the engagement I make. In short, if I say to you, 'Hope!' it is because he always hears the voice of those who desire to become better; for God has sent him on this earth to further the belief in Providence."

Thus speaking, the countenance of Fleur de Marie became glowing and inspired; her pale cheeks were coloured for a moment with a slight carnation; her beautiful blue eyes softly sparkled; she beamed forth a beauty so noble, so touching that La Louve, profoundly affected at this conversation, looked at her companion with admiration, and cried, "Where am I? Do I dream? I have never heard nor seen anything like this; it is not possible! but who are you, once more? oh! I said truly that you were not one of us! But how is it that you who speak so well, who can do so much, who know such powerful people, are here, a prisoner with us? is it to tempt us? You are, then, for good—what the devil is for evil!"

Fleur de Marie was about to reply, when Madam Armand came and interrupted her to conduct her to Madam d'Harville. She said to La Louve, who remained dumb from surprise, "I see with pleasure that the presence of La Goualeuse in this prison has been beneficial to you and your companions. I know that you have made a collection for poor Mont Saint Jean; that is good and charitable, La Louve. It shall be reckoned to you. I was sure that you were better than you appeared to be. In recompense for your good action, I think I can promise you that your imprisonment shall be abridged by many days." And Madam Armand departed, followed by Fleur de Marie. * * * *

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PROTECTRESS.

THE inspectress entered, with La Goualeuse, the room where Clemence was; the pale cheeks of the girl were slightly flushed from her earnest conversation with La Louve.

"My lady, the marchioness, pleased with the excellent accounts I have given of you," said Madame Armand to Fleur de Marie, "desires to see you, and perhaps will deign to obtain permission for you to leave here before the expiration of your time."

"I thank you, madam," answered Fleur de Marie, timidly, to Madam Armand, who left her alone with the noble lady.

Clemence, struck with the beautiful features of her *protégée*, and her graceful and modest bearing, could not help remembering that the Goualeuse had, in her sleep, pronounced the name of Rudolph, and that the inspectress believed her to be preyed upon by a deep and concealed love. Although perfectly convinced that the Grand Duke Rudolph could not be in question, Clemence allowed that, at least in point of beauty, La Goualeuse was worthy of the love of a prince. At the sight of her protectress, whose expression, as we have said, was that of ineffable goodness, Fleur de Marie felt herself irresistibly drawn towards her.

"My child," said Clemence, "in praising much the sweetness of your disposition and the exemplary propriety of your conduct, Madam Armand complains of your want of confidence in her."

Fleur de Marie held down her head without replying.

"The peasant dress in which you were clothed when you were arrested, your silence on the subject of where you resided before you came here, prove that you conceal something."

"Madam"—

"I have no right to your confidence, my poor child; I wish to ask you no improper questions; only I am assured, that if I ask your release from prison it will be granted. Before I ask, I wish to talk with you of your projects and resources for the future. Once free, what will you do? If, as I doubt not, you are decided to follow in the good path you have entered, have confidence in me—I will put you in a way to gain your living honourably."

La Goualeuse was affected to tears at the interest Madam d'Harville evinced for her. She said, after a moment's thought, "You deign, madam, to show yourself so benevolent and generous, that I ought, perhaps, to break the silence which I have hitherto preserved as to the past. An oath compelled me."

"An oath?"

"Yes, madam; I have sworn to conceal from justice, and from the persons employed in this prison, in what manner I have been brought here; yet, if you will, madam, make me a promise"—

"What promise?"

"To keep my secret. I can, thanks to you, madam, without breaking my oath, relieve some respectable people who, doubtless, are very uneasy about me."

"Count on my discretion; I will only tell what you authorize me to say."

"Oh, thank you, madam! I feared so much that my silence towards my benefactors would look like ingratitude."

The sweet tears of Fleur de Marie, her language, almost chosen, struck Madam d'Harville with renewed astonishment.

"I cannot conceal from you," said she, "that your bearing, your words, all astonish me much. How, with an education such as you appear to have had, how could you"—

"Fall so low, madam?" said the Goualeuse, bitterly.

"Yes, alas!"

"It is but a short time since I received it. I owe it to a generous protector, who, like you, madam, without knowing me, without ever having the favourable accounts which they have given you here of me, took compassion on me."

"And who is this protector?"

"I am ignorant, madam.'

"You are ignorant?"

"He has only made himself known to me by his inexhaustible goodness. Thanks to Heaven! I found myself in his way."

"Where did you meet him?"

"One night, in the city, madam," said La Goualeuse, casting down her eyes, "a man wanted to strike me; this unknown benefactor courageously defended me. Such was my first encounter with him."

"He was, then, a man of the common order?"

"The first time I saw him he had their dress and language, but afterwards"—

"Afterwards?"

"The manner in which he spoke to me, the profound respect shown him by the people to whom he confided me, all proved to me that he had disguised himself as one of the men who frequent the city."

"But for what purpose?"

"I do not know."

"And the name of this mysterious protector, do you know it?"

"Oh, yes, madam, thank heaven!" said Goualeuse, with warmth; "for I can bless and adore without ceasing this name. My deliverer is known as Rudolph, madam."

Clemence blushed deeply.

"And has he no other name?" asked she, quickly, of Fleur de Marie.

"I do not know, madam. At the farm where he sent me, he was only known by the name of Rudolph."

"And his age?"

"He is still young, madam."

"And handsome?"

"Oh, yes; handsome, noble—as his heart."

The grateful, feeling manner with which Fleur de Marie pronounced these words, caused a disagreeable sensation to Madam d'Harville. An invincible, an inexplicable presentiment told her that this Rudolph was the prince.

"The observations of the inspectress were well founded," thought Clemence. "The Goualeuse loved Rudolph; it was his name she pronounced in her sleep. Under what strange circumstances had the prince and this poor girl met? Why did Rudolph go disguised into the city?" She could not resolve these questions; only she remembered that Sarah had formerly, wickedly and falsely, related to her some pretended eccentricities of Rudolph, and of his strange amours. Was it not, indeed, strange that he had taken from a life of misery this creature, of ravishing beauty and of no common mind?

Clemence had noble qualities, but she was a woman, and she loved Rudolph profoundly, although she had determined to bury this secret in the very depths of her heart. Without reflecting that this, no doubt, was one of those generous actions which the prince was accustomed to do secretly; without reflecting that, perhaps, she confounded with love a sentiment of warm gratitude; without reflecting, finally, that of this sentiment, even if it were more tender, Rudolph might be ignorant, the lady, in the first feeling of bitterness and injustice, could not prevent herself considering the Goualeuse as a rival. Her pride revolted in feeling that she blushed; that she suffered, in spite of herself, at a rivalry so abject. She resumed, then, in a cold manner, which cruelly contrasted with the affectionate benevolence of her first words, "And how is it, girl, that your protector leaves you in prison? How did you get here?"

"Madam," said Fleur de Marie, timidly, struck with this change of language; "have I displeased you in any way?"

"How could you have displeased me?" demanded Madam d'Harville, with haughtiness.

"It seems to me that just now you spoke to me with more kindness, madam."

"Truly, girl, must I weigh each of my words, since I consent to interest myself in you? I have the right, I think, to address you questions?"

Hardly were these words pronounced, than Clemence, for many reasons, regretted their severity. In the first place, by a praiseworthy return of generosity; then because she thought, by offending her rival, she could learn nothing more of what she wished to know.

In effect, the countenance of La Goualeuse, one moment open and confiding, became instantly reserved.

Like the sensitive plant, which at the first touch closes its delicate leaves, and folds them within its bosom, the heart of Fleur de Marie contracted painfully.

Clemence resumed gently, not to awaken the suspicions of her *protégée* by too sudden a change, "In truth, I repeat to you, I cannot comprehend that, having so much to praise in your benefactor, you should be a prisoner here; how, after having sincerely returned to the paths of rectitude, could you cause yourself to be arrested in a place to you interdicted? All this seems to me extraordinary. You speak of an oath which so far has imposed silence upon you; but this oath even is so strange!"

"I have told the truth, madam."

"I am sure of it; one has only to see and hear you to believe you incapable of a falsehood. But, what is incomprehensible in your situation, augments, irritates my impatient curiosity; it is only to that that you must attribute the sharpness of my words just now. Come, I avow I was wrong; for, although I had no other right to your confidence than my earnest wish to be useful to you, you have offered to tell me that which you have told to no one, and I am very sensible, believe me, my poor child, of this proof of your faith in the interest I have for you. Hence, I promise you, in guarding scrupulously your secret, if you confide it to me, I will do all in my power to meet your wishes."

Thanks to this palliating speech, Madam d'Harville regained the confidence of La Goualeuse, for a moment impaired. Fleur de Marie, in her innocence, reproached herself for having misinterpreted the words which had wounded her.

"Pardon me, madam," said she; "I was doubtless wrong not to tell you at once what you wished to know; but you asked me the name of my rescuer; in spite of myself, I cannot resist the pleasure of speaking of him."

"Nothing is better; it proves how grateful you are towards him. But why have you left the good people with whom he had placed you? Does your oath have reference to this?"

"Yes, madam; but, thanks to you, I believe now, still keeping my word, I shall be able to satisfy my benefactors as to my disappearance."

"Come, my poor child, I listen."

"It is about three months since M. Rudolph placed me at a farm situated four or five leagues hence."

"He conducted you there himself?"

"Yes, madam; he confided me to the care of a lady as good as she was venerable, whom I soon loved as a mother. She and the curé of the village, at the request of M. Rudolph, took charge of my education."

"And M. Rudolph often came to the farm?"

"No madam; he came there only three times while I was there."

Clemence could not conceal a thrill of joy.

"And when he came to see you, it made you very happy, did it not?"

"Oh, yes, madam! it was for me more than happiness; it was a sentiment mixed with gratitude, respect, admiration, and even a little fear."

"Fear!"

"From him to me—from him to others—the distance is so great!"

"But what is his rank?"

"I am ignorant if he has any rank, madam."

"Yet you speak of the distance which exists between him and others.

"Oh, madam! that which places him above the rest of the world is the elevation of his character—his inexhaustible generosity for those who suffer; it is the enthusiasm with which he inspires everybody. The wicked even cannot hear his name without trembling; they respect him as much as they fear him. But pardon me, madam, for having again spoken of him—I ought to be silent; for I should give you but an imperfect idea of him whom I ought to content myself with adoring to myself. As well attempt to express by words the grandeur of Heaven! This comparison is, perhaps, sacrilegious, madam. But will it offend to compare to Goodness itself the man who has given me a consciousness of good and evil—who has dragged me from the abyss—to whom I owe a new existence?"

"I do not blame you, my child; I comprehend your feelings. But how have you abandoned this farm, where you were so happy?"

"Alas, it was not voluntary, madam!"

"Who forced you, then?"

"One night, a short time since," said Fleur de Marie, trembling at the recital, "I went to the parsonage of the village, when a wicked woman, who had treated me cruelly in my childhood, and a man, her accomplice, who was concealed with her in a ravine, threw themselves upon me, wrapped me up, and carried me off in a carriage."

"For what purpose?"

"I do not know, madam. My waylayers were acting, I think, under the orders of some powerful persons."

"What then ensued?"

"Hardly had the vehicle moved, than the bad woman, whose name was La Chouette (Screech-Owl), cried, 'I have got some vitriol; I am going to wash the face of La Goualeuse, to disfigure her.'"

"How horrid! Unfortunate child! What saved you from that danger?"

"The accomplice of this woman, a blind man, called the Schoolmaster."

"He defended you?"

"Yes, madam, on this occasion and on another. This time a struggle ensued between him and La Chouette. Availing himself of his strength, he forced her to throw out of the window the bottle which contained the vitriol. This was the first service he rendered me, after having assisted in carrying me off. The night was very dark. At the end of an hour and a-half the carriage stopped, I believe on the high road which crosses the plain of Saint Denis; a man on horseback waited for us here. 'Well,' said he, 'have you got her at last?' 'Yes, we have her,' answered La Chouette, who was furious at having been prevented from disfiguring me. 'If you wish to get rid of this little thing, there is a good way; I will stretch her on the road—drive the wheels of the carriage over her head—it will look as if she was run over by accident.'"

"Oh, this is frightful!"

"Alas, madam! La Chouette was well capable of doing what she said. Happily, the man on horseback said that he did not wish to harm me; that it was only necessary to keep me shut up for two months in some place where I could neither get out nor write to anyone. Then La Chouette proposed to take me to a man called Bras-Rouge, who kept a tavern in the Champs Elysées. In this tavern there were several subterranean chambers; one of them, La Chouette said, could answer for my prison. The man on horseback accepted this proposition. Then he promised me that, after remaining two months with Bras-Rouge, I should be so provided for that I would not regret the farm at Bouqueval."

"What a strange mystery!"

"This man gave some money to La Chouette, promising her some more when I should be taken from Bras-Rouge, and set out on a gallop. We continued our route towards Paris. A short time before we arrived at the gates, the Schoolmaster said to La Chouette, 'You wish to shut up La Goualeuse in one of Bras-Rouge's cellars: you know very well that, being near the river, these cellars in winter are always inundated. Do you wish to drown her?' 'Yes,' answered La Chouette."

"But what had you done to this horrible woman?"

"Nothing, madam; and yet, since my infancy, she has always shown this feeling towards me. The Schoolmaster answered, 'I will not have the Goualeuse drowned; she shall not go to Bras-Rouge.' La Chouette was as much surprised as I was, madam, to hear this man defend me thus. She became furious, and swore that she would take me to Bras-Rouge in spite of him. 'I defy you,' said he, 'for I have La Goualeuse by the arm; I will not let her go, and I'll strangle you if you come near her.' 'But what do you mean to do with her?' cried La Chouette, 'since she must be put out of the way for two months.' 'There is a way,' said the Schoolmaster; 'we are going to the Champs Elysées; we will stop the carriage near the guard-house; you will go and look for Bras-Rouge

at his tavern. It is midnight; you will find him there; bring him with you; he will take La Goualeuse to the post, and declare she is a gay girl, whom he found near his tavern. As they are condemned to three months' imprisonment when they are caught on the Champs Elysées, and Goualeuse is still on the police lists, she will be arrested, and sent to Saint Lazare, where she will be as well guarded and concealed as in the cellar of Bras-Rouge.' 'But,' replied La Chouette; 'the Goualeuse will not suffer herself to be arrested; once at the guard-house, she will tell all; she will denounce us. Supposing, even, that she is imprisoned, she will write to her protectors; all will be discovered.' 'No, she will go to prison willingly,' answered the Schoolmaster; 'she must swear that she will not denounce us to anyone as long as she remains at Saint Lazare, nor afterward neither; she owes as much to me, for I have prevented her being disfigured by you, and drowned at Bras-Rouge's; but if, after having sworn not to speak, she should do it, we will set the farm at Bouqueval a-fire.' Then, addressing me, he said, 'Decide! swear the oath I ask! you shall go to prison for two months; otherwise I abandon you to La Chouette, who will take you to the cellar, where you'll be drowned. Come, decide. I know, if you swear, you will keep your oath.' "

"And you have sworn?"

"Alas! yes, madam; I feared so much to be disfigured by La Chouette or to be drowned in a cellar; that appeared to me so frightful. Any other kind of death would have appeared less fearful. I should not, perhaps, have endeavoured to escape."

"What a gloomy idea at your age!" said Madam d'Harville, looking at La Goualeuse with surprise. "Once away from this place, returned to your benefactors, will you not be very happy? Has not your repentance effaced the past?"

"Can the past be effaced? Can the past be forgotten? Can repentence destroy the memory, madam?" cried Fleur de Marie, in a tone so despairing, that Clemence shuddered.

"But all faults can be redeemed, unhappy child!"

"But the recollection of the stain—madam, does it not become more and more terrible in measure as the mind is purified, as the soul becomes elevated? Alas! the more you mount, the deeper appears the abyss from which you have emerged."

"Then you renounce all hope of re-establishment and pardon?"

"On the part of others—no, madam; your goodness proves that indulgence is never wanting to the penitent."

"You will then be the only one without pity towards yourself?"

"Others may be ignorant, may pardon and forget what I have been. I, madam, never can forget."

"And sometimes you wish to die?"

"Sometimes!" said La Goualeuse, smiling bitterly; "yes, madam, sometimes."

"Yet you feared to be disfigured by that horrible woman? you cling to your beauty, then, poor child? That announces that life has still some charms for you. Courage, then—courage!"

"It is, perhaps, a weakness to think so; but if I were handsome, as you say, madam, I should wish to die handsome, in pronouncing the name of my benefactor."

The eyes of Madame d'Harville filled with tears.

Fleur de Marie had said these words so simply; her angelic features, pale and cast down, her mournful smile, were so much in unison with her words, that no one could doubt the reality of her gloomy desire. Madam d'Harville was endowed with too much sensibility not too feel what was fatal and inflexible in this thought of La Goualeuse—"*I shall never forget what I have been*"—a fixed, constant idea, which would predominate and torture the life of Fleur de Marie. Clemence, ashamed at having for a moment misunderstood the generosity, always so disinterested of the prince, also regretted that she should have had for a moment a feeling of jealousy towards La Goualeuse, who had expressed, with so much warmth, her gratitude towards her protector. Strange thing—the admiration which this poor prisoner showed so vividly for Rudolph, augmented, perhaps, still more the profound love which Clemence was for ever to conceal from him. She resumed, to drive away her thoughts: "I hope that, in future, you will be less severe towards yourself. But let us speak of your oath; now I can understand your silence. You did not wish to denounce the wretches?"

"Although the Schoolmaster took part in my abduction, he had twice defended me—I was afraid of being ungrateful towards him."

"And you lent yourself to the designs of these monsters?"

"Yes, madam, I was so much alarmed! La Chouette went to seek Bras-Rouge: he took me to the guard-house, saying he found me roving about his inn: I did not deny it; I was arrested, and brought here."

"But your friends at the farm must be very much alarmed?"

"Alas, madam, in my fright, I did not reflect that my oath would prevent me from informing them; now it gives me much pain, but I believe, that without breaking my oath, I can beg you to write to Madam Georges, at the farm of Bouqueval, to have no uneasiness about me, without telling her where I am, for I have promised to be silent."

"My child, these precautions will become useless if, at my recommendation, you are pardoned; to-morrow you shall return to the farm, without having broken your oath; you

can then consult your benefactors, to know how far you are restricted by this oath, drawn from you by threats."

"You think, madam, that, thanks to your kindness, I can hope to leave here soon?"

"You deserve so much interest, that I shall succeed, I am sure, and I doubt not that after to-morrow you can go yourself to reassure your benefactors."

"How can I have merited so much kindness on your ladyship's part? How can I show my gratitude?"

"By continuing to conduct yourself as you have done. I only regret I can do nothing for your future welfare—it is a pleasure that your friends have reserved."

Madam Armand entered suddenly, with an alarmed air. "Madam," said she, to Clemence, with hesitation, "I am grieved at the message I have to deliver to you."

"What do you mean to say, madam?"

"The Duke de Lucenay is below—he comes from your house, madam."

"You frighten me; what is it?"

"I am ignorant, madam; but M. de Lucenay has information for you, he says, as sad as it was unforeseen. He learned at his wife's that you were here, and he came in all haste."

"Sad news!" said Madam d'Harville. Then suddenly she cried, in a heartrending tone, "My daughter—my child, perhaps! Oh, speak, madam!"

"I am ignorant, madam."

"Oh! in mercy, madam, take me to M. de Lucenay," cried Madam d'Harville, going out, quite bewildered, and followed by Madam Armand.

"Poor mother!" said the Goualeuse, sadly, "Oh, no, it is impossible! At the moment even when she was showing so much benevolence towards me, such a blow to fall! No, no—once more, it is impossible!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FORGED INTIMACY.

WE will conduct the reader to the house in the Rue du Temple, the day of the suicide of M. d'Harville, about three o'clock in the afternoon. Pipelet, the porter, alone in the lodge was occupied in mending a boot. The chaste porter was dejected and melancholy. As a soldier, in the humiliation of his defeat, passes his hand sadly over his scars, Pipelet breathed a profound sigh, stopped his work, and moved his trembling finger over the transverse fracture of his huge hat, made by an insolent hand. Then all the chagrin, inquietude, and fears of Alfred Pipelet were awakened in thinking of the inconceivable and incessant pursuits of the author.

Pipelet had not a very extended or elevated mind; his imagination was not the most lively nor the most poetical, but he possessed a very solid, very logical, very common sense.

Cabrion, a painter, formerly a tenant, had seen fit to make the porter a butt of the most audacious practical joke, inundating him with caricatures, laughable labels, and startling appearances before his unexpectant appalled sight.

Unfortunately, by a natural consequence of the rectitude of his judgment, not being able to comprehend practical jokes, Pipelet endeavoured to find some reasonable motive for the outrageous conduct of Cabrion, and on this subject he posed himself with a thousand insoluble questions. Thus, sometimes, a new Paschal, he felt himself seized with a vertigo in trying to sound the bottomless abyss which the infernal genius of the painter had dug under his feet. How many times, in the overflowings of his imagination, he had been forced to commune within himself, thanks to the phrenzied scepticism of Madam Pipelet, who, only looking at facts, and disdaining to seek after causes, grossly considered the incomprehensible conduct of Cabrion towards Alfred as simple comicality.

Pipelet, a serious man, could not admit of such an interpretation; he groaned at the blindness of his wife; his dignity as a man revolted at the thought that he could be the plaything of a combination so vulgar as a *lark!* He was absolutely convinced that the unheard-of conduct of Cabrion concealed some mysterious plot under a frivolous appearance.

It was to solve this fatal problem that the man in the big hat exhausted his powerful logic. "I would sooner lay my head on the scaffold," said this austere man, who, as soon as he touched them, increased immensely the importance of any propositions, "I would sooner lay my head upon the scaffold than admit that, in the mere intention of a stupid pleasantry, Cabrion could be so obstinately exasperated against me; *a farce* is only played for the gallery. Now, in his last undertaking, this obnoxious creature had no witness; he acted alone and in obscurity, as always; he clandestinely introduced himself into the solitude of my lodge to deposit on my forehead a hideous kiss! I ask any disinterested person, for what purpose? It was not from bravado—no one saw him; it was not from pleasure—the laws of nature oppose it; it was not from friendship—I have but one enemy in the world—it is he. It must, then, be acknowledged that there is a mystery there which my reason cannot penetrate! Then to what does this diabolical plot, concerted and pursued with a persistence which alarms me, tend? That I cannot comprehend: it is this impossibility to raise the veil, which, by degrees, is undermining and consuming me."

Such were the painful reflections of Pipelet at the moment when we present him to our readers. The honest porter had just torn

open his bleeding wounds, by carrying his hand mechanically to the fracture of his hat, when a piercing voice, coming from one of the upper stories of the house, made these words resound again: "M. Pipelet, quick! quick! come up! make haste!"

"I do not know that voice," said Alfred, after a moment of anxious listening, and he let his arm, inclosed in the boot he was mending, fall on his knees.

"M. Pipelet! make haste!" repeated the voice in a pressing tone.

"That voice is completely strange to me. It is masculine: it calls me, that I can affirm. It is not a sufficient reason that I should abandon my lodge. Leave it—desert it in the absence of my wife—never!" cried Alfred, heroically, "never!"

"Mr. Pipelet," said the voice, "come up quick, Mrs. Pipelet is off in a swoon."

"Anastasia!" cried Alfred, rising from his seat; then he fell back again, saying to himself, "child that I am—it is impossible; my wife went out an hour ago. Yes, but might she not have returned without my seeing her? This would be rather irregular; but I must declare that it is possible."

"Mr. Pipelet, come up; I have your wife in my arms!"

"Some one has my wife in their arms!" said Pipelet, rising abruptly.

"I cannot unlace Mrs. Pipelet all alone!" added the voice.

These words produced a magical effect upon Alfred: his face flushed, his chastity revolted.

"The masculine and unknown voice speaks of unlacing Anastasia!" cried he; "I oppose it, I forbid it!" and he rushed out of the lodge; but on the threshold he stopped.

Pipelet found himself in one of those horribly critical, and eminently dramatical positions, so often described by poets. On the one hand, duty retained him in his lodge: on the other, his chaste and conjugal susceptibility called him to the upper stories of the house. In the midst of these terrible perplexities, the voice said:

"You don't come, Mr. Pipelet? so much the worse—I cut the strings, and I shut my eyes!"

This threat decided Pipelet.

"*Môssieur!*" cried he, in a stentorian voice, "in the name of honour, I conjure you, to cut nothing—to leave my wife intact! I come!" and Alfred rushed up-stairs, leaving, in his alarm, the door of the lodge open. Hardly had he left it, than a man entered quickly, took from the table a hammer, jumped on the bed, at the back part of the obscure alcove, and vanished. This operation was done so quickly, that the porter, remembering almost immediately that he had left the door open, returned precipitately, shut it, and carried off the key, without suspecting that any one could have entered in this interval. After this measure of precaution, Alfred started again to the assistance of Anastasia, crying, with all his strength, "Cut nothing—I am coming—here I am—I place my wife under the safeguard of your delicacy!"

Hardly had he mounted the first flight, before he heard the voice of Anastasia, not from the upper story, but in the alley.

This voice, shriller than ever cried, "Alfred! here you leave the lodge alone! Where are you, old gad-about?"

At this moment, Pipelet was about placing his right foot on the landing-place of the first story; he remained petrified, his head turned towards the bottom of the stairs, his mouth open, his eyes fixed, his foot raised.

"Alfred!" cried Mrs. Pipelet, anew.

"Anastasia is below—she is not above, occupied in being sick," said Pipelet to himself, faithful to his logical argumentation. "But, then this unknown and masculine voice, who threatened to unlace her, is an impostor. He has been playing a cruel game with my emotions! What is his design? There is something extraordinary going on here! No matter: do your duty, happen what may! After having responded to my wife, I shall mount to enlighten this mystery, and verify this voice."

Pipelet descended, very much troubled, and found himself face to face with his wife.

"It is you!" said he.

"Well! yes, it is me; who would you have it to be?"

"It is you—my eyes do not deceive me!"

"Ah, now! what is the matter, that makes your big eyes look like billiard balls? You look at me as if you were going to eat me."

"Your presence reveals to me that something has been passing here—things"—

"What things? Come, give me the key of the lodge; why do you leave it? I come from the office of the Normandy diligences, where I went in a hack, to carry the trunk of M. Bradamanté, who did not wish it to be known that he was about to leave to-night, and who could not depend on that little scoundrel, Tortillard (Hoppy)—and he is right!"

Saying these words, Mrs. Pipelet took the key, which her husband held in his hand, opened the lodge, and went in before her husband.

Hardly had they entered, when a person, descending the staircase lightly, passed rapidly and unperceived before the lodge. It was the "masculine voice" which had so deeply excited the inquietudes of Alfred.

Pipelet rested himself heavily on his chair, and said to his wife, in a trembling voice, "Anastasia, I do not feel at my accustomed ease; things occurring here—events"—

"Now you repeat that again; but things occur everywhere; what is the matter? Come, let us see—why you are all wet—all in a perspiration! What effort have you been making? He's all a-trickling—the old darling!"

"Yes, I perspire, as I have reason to;"

Pipelet passed his hand over his face dripping with moisture; "for there are regular revolutionary events passing here."

"Again I ask what is it? You never can remain quiet. You must always be trotting about like a cat, instead of remaining in your chair to take care of the lodge."

"If I trot, it is for you."

"For me?"

"Yes; to spare you an outrage for which we both should have groaned and blushed, I have deserted a post which I consider as sacred as the sentry-box."

"Some one wished to commit an outrage on me—on me?"

"It was not on you, since the outrage of which you were threatened was to have been accomplished upstairs, and you were gone out"—

"May Old Harry run away with me, if I understand a single word of what you are singing there. Ah, ah! is it that you are decidedly losing your noddle? I shall begin to think that you are absent-minded—the fault of that beggarly Cabrion! Since his games of the other day, I don't know you; you look struck all of a heap. That being will be always your nightmare."

Hardly had Anastasia pronounced the words than a strange thing came to pass. Alfred remained sitting, his face turned towards the bed. The lodge was lighted by the sickly light of a winter's day, and by a lamp. At the moment his wife pronounced the name Cabrion, Pipelet thought he saw in the shade of the alcove the immovable, cunning face of the painter. It was he, his pointed hat, long hair, thin face, satanic smile, queer beard, and paralysing gaze. For a moment, Pipelet thought himself in a dream; he passed his hand over his eyes, believing that he was the victim of an illusion. It was not an illusion. Nothing could be more real than this apparition. Frightful thing! nobody could be seen but only a head, of which the living flesh stood out in bold relief from the obscurity of the alcove. At this sight Pipelet fell over backward, without saying a word; he raised his right arm towards the bed, and pointed at this terrible vision, with a gesture so alarming, that Mrs. Pipelet turned to seek the cause of an alarm of which she soon partook, in spite of her habitual courage. She recoiled two steps, seized with force the hand of Alfred, and cried, "Cabrion!"

"Yes," murmured Pipelet, in a hollow voice, almost extinct, shutting his eyes.

The stupor of the pair paid the greatest honour to the talent of the artist who had so admirably painted on the pasteboard the features of Cabrion. Her first surprise over, Anastasia, as bold as a lion, ran to the bed, got on it, and tore the picture from the wall.

The amazon crowned this valiant enterprise in shouting, as a war-cry, her favourite exclamation, "Go ahead!"

Alfred, with his eyes closed, his hands stretched forth, remained immovable, as he had always been accustomed to do in the critical moments of his life. The convulsive oscillations of his hat, alone revealed, from time to time, the continued violence of his interior emotions.

"Open your eyes, old darling," said Mrs. Pipelet, triumphantly; "its nothing! its a picture; the portrait of that scoundrel Cabrion! Look, see how I stamp upon him!" and Anastasia, in her indignation, threw the picture on the ground, and trampled it under her feet, crying, "that's the way I would like to treat his flesh and bones, the wretch!" then picking it up, "see!" said she, "now it has my marks; look now!"

Alfred shook his head negatively, without saying a word, and making a sign to his wife to take away the detested picture.

"Has ever anyone seen such impudence? This is not all; he has written at the bottom, in red letters, 'Cabrion, to his good friend Pipelet; for life,'" said the portress, examining the picture by the light.

"His good friend for life!" murmured Alfred; raising his hands as if to call heaven to witness this new outrageous irony.

"But how could he do it?" said Anastasia. "This portrait was not there this morning when I made the bed, very sure. You took the key with you just now: nobody could have entered while you were absent? How, then, once more, could this portrait get there? Could it be you, by chance, who put it there, old darling?"

At this monstrous hypothesis, Alfred bounced from his seat; he opened his eyes wide and threatening.

"I fasten in my alcove the portrait of this evil-doer, who, not content with persecuting me by his odious presence, pursues me at night in my dreams—the daytime in a picture! Would you make me mad, Anastasia? mad enough to be chained?"

"Well! for the sake of making peace, you might have agreed with Cabrion during my absence. Where would be the great harm?"

"I make up with—oh, merciful powers! you hear her!"

"And then, he might have given you his portrait, as a pledge of friendship. If this is so, do not deny it."

"Anastasia!"

"If this is so, it must be confessed you are as capricious as a pretty woman."

"Wife!"

"In short, it must have been you who placed the portrait!"

"I—oh!"

"But who is it then?"

"You, madam."

"I!"

"Yes," cried Pipelet wildly, "it is you; I have reason to believe it is you. This morning, having my back turned towards the bed, I could see nothing."

"But, old darling, I tell you it must be you, otherwise I shall think it was the devil."

"I have not left the lodge, and when I went upstairs to answer to the call of the masculine organ, I had the key; the door was shut. You opened it: deny that!"

"Ma foi, it is true!"

"You confess, then?"

"I confess that I comprehend nothing. Its a game, and it is prettily played."

"A game!" cried Pipelet, carried away by frenzied indignation. "Ah! there you are again! I tell you, I, that all this conceals some abominable plot; there is something under all this—a plot. The abyss is hidden under flowers—they try to stun me to prevent my seeing the precipice from which they wish to plunge me. It only remains for me to place myself under the protection of the laws. Happily, the Lord is on our side;" and Pipelet turned towards the door.

"Where are you going, old darling?"

"To the commissary's to lodge my complaint, and this portrait as proof of the persecutions I am overwhelmed with."

"But what will you complain of?"

"What will I complain of? How! my most inveterate enemy shall find means by proceedings—fraudulently to force me to have his portrait in my house, even on my nuptial bed, and the magistrates will not take me under their ægis? Give me the portrait, Anastasia—give it to me—not the side where the painting is, the sight revolts me! The traitor cannot deny it; it is in his hand: Cabrion to his good friend Pipelet, for life. For life! Yes, that's it; for my life, without doubt, he pursues me, and he will finish by having it. I live in continual alarm: I shall think that this infernal being is here, always here—under the floor, in the walls, in the ceiling! at night he sees me reposing in the arms of my wife; in the daytime he is standing behind me, always with his satanic smile; and who will tell me that even at this moment he is not here, concealed somewhere, like a venomous insect? Come, now! are you there, monster? Are you here?" cried Pipelet, accompanying this furious imprecation with a circular movement of the head, as if he had wished to interrogate all parts of the lodge.

"I am here, good friend!" said most affectionately, the well-known voice of Cabrion.

These words seemed to come from the bottom of the alcove, merely from the effects of ventriloquism; for the infernal artist was standing outside the door of the lodge, enjoying the smallest details of this scene; however, after having pronounced these last words, he prudently made off, not without leaving, as we shall see, a new subject of rage, astonishment, and meditation to his victim. Mrs. Pipelet, always courageous and sceptical, looked under the bed, and in every hole and corner, without success, while M. Pipelet, undone by the last blow, had fallen on his chair in a state of utter despair.

"It's nothing, Alfred," said Anastasia; "the scoundrel was concealed behind the door, and while I looked one way, he escaped the other. Patience, I'll catch him one of these days, and then, let him look out! he shall taste the handle of my broom!"

The door opened, and Mrs. Seraphin, housekeeper of Jacques Ferrand, entered.

"Good-day, Mrs. Seraphin," said Mrs. Pipelet, who, wishing to conceal from a stranger her domestic sorrows, assumed a very gracious and smiling air; "what can I do to serve you?"

"First, tell me, then, what is your new sign?"

"New sign?"

"The little sign."

"A little sign?"

"Yes, black with red letters, which is nailed over the door of your alley."

"In the street?"

"Why, yes, in the street, just over your door."

"My dear Mrs. Seraphin, may I never speak again, if I understand a word; and you, old darling?"

Alfred remained dumb.

"In truth, it concerns Mr. Pipelet," said Mrs. Seraphin; "he must explain this to me."

Alfred uttered a sort of low, inarticulate groan, shaking his hat, a pantomime signifying that Alfred found himself incapable of explaining anything to others, being sufficiently pre-occupied with an affinity of problems, each one more difficult of solution than the other.

"Pay no attention, Mrs. Seraphin," said Anastasia. "Poor Alfred has got the cramp; that makes him"—

"But what is this sign, then, of which you speak?"

"Perhaps our neighbour"—

"No, no; I tell you it is a little sign nailed over your door."

"Come, you want to joke."

"Not at all; I saw it as I came in. There is written on it in large letters, 'Pipelet and Cabrion, Dealers in Friendship, etc. Apply within.'"

"That's written over our door, do you hear, Alfred?"

Pipelet looked at Mrs. Seraphin with a wild stare. He did not comprehend; he did not wish to comprehend."

"It is in the street—on a sign!" repeated Mrs. Pipelet, confounded at this new audacity."

"Yes, for I have just read it. Then I said to myself, 'What a funny thing! Pipelet is a cobbler by trade, and he informs the passers-by that he is engaged in a *commerce d'amitié* with Cabrion. What does it signify? There is something concealed, it is clear; but as the sign says, inquire within, Mrs. Pipelet will explain it.' But look

there," cried Mrs. Seraphin, suddenly, "your husband looks as if he was sick; take care, he will fall backward!"

Mrs. Pipelet received Alfred in her arms, in a fainting state. This last blow had been too violent; the man nearly lost all consciousness as he pronounced these words:

"The creature has publicly posted me."

"I told you, Mrs. Seraphin, Alfred has the cramp, without speaking of an unchained blackguard, who undermines him with his sorry tricks. The poor old darling cannot resist it! Happily, I have a drop of bitters here; probably it will put him on his legs."

In fact, thanks to the infallible remedy of Mrs. Pipelet, Alfred by degrees recovered his senses; but, alas! hardly had he come to, than he had to undergo another trial.

A middle-aged person, neatly dressed, and very pleasing face, opened the door, and said, "I have just seen on a sign placed over this door, 'Pipelet and Cabrion, Dealers in Friendship.' Can you, if you please, do me the honour to inform me what this means—you being the porter of this house?"

"What this means!" cried Pipelet in a thundering voice, giving vent to his indignation, too long suppressed; "this means that Mr. Cabrion is an infamous impostor, sir!"

The man, at this sudden and furious explosion, drew back a step. Alfred, much exasperated, with a fiery look and purple face, had stretched his body half out of the lodge, and leaned his contracted hands on the lower half of the door, while the figures of Mrs. Seraphin and Anastasia could be vaguely seen in the background, in the semi-obscure light of the lodge.

"Learn, sir," cried Pipelet, "that I have no dealings with this scoundrel Cabrion, and that of friendship still less than any other!"

"It is true; and you must be very queer, old noodle that you are, to come and ask such a question," cried Madame Pipelet, sharply, showing her quarrelsome face over the shoulder of her husband.

"Madame!" said the man sententiously, falling back another step, "notices are made to be read; you put them up, I read; I have the right to do so, but you have no right to say such rude things."

"Rude things yourself, you beggarly wretch!" replied Anastasia, showing her teeth. "You are a low-bred fellow. Alfred, your boot tree, till I take the length of his muzzle, to teach him to come and play the Joe Miller at his age, old clown!"

"Insults, when one comes to ask the meaning of a notice placed over your own door? It shall not pass over in this way, madam!"

"But, sir!" cried the unhappy porter.

"But, sir," answered the quiz, pretending to be angry, "be as friendly as you please with your Mr. Cabrion, but, zounds! don't stick it in large letters under the noses of the passers-by! I find myself under the necessity of telling you that you are a pitiful wretch, and that I shall go and make my complaint to the authorities:" and the quiz departed in a great rage.

"Anastasia!" said Mr. Pipelet, in a sorrowful tone, "I shall not survive this, I feel it: I am wounded to death. I have no hope of escaping him. You see, my name is publicly stuck up alongside of this wretch. He dares to say that I have a friendly trade with him, and the public will believe it. I inform you—I say it—I communicate it; it is monstrous, it is enormous, it is an infernal idea: but it must finish; the measure is full; either he or I must fall in this struggle!" and, overcoming his habitual apathy, Pipelet determined on a vigorous resolution, seized the portrait of Cabrion, and rushed towards the door.

"Where are you going to, Alfred?"

"To the commissary's. At the same time I am going to tear down this infamous sign; then, with this portrait and this sign in my hand, I will cry to the commissary, 'Defend me! avenge me! deliver me from Cabrion!'"

"Well said, old darling; stir yourself, shake yourself; if you cannot get the sign down, ask the next door to help you, and lend you his ladder."

"Rascally Cabrion. Oh, if I had him, and I could do it, I'd fry him on my stove. I should like so much to see him suffer. Yes, people are guillotined who do not deserve it as much as he does. The wretch! I should like to see him on the scaffold; the villain!"

Alfred showed under these circumstances the most sublime equanimity. Notwithstanding his great causes of revenge against Cabrion, he had the generosity to feel sentiments akin to pity for him.

"No," said he, "no; even if I could, I would not ask for his head."

"As for me, I would. Go, do it!" cried the ferocious Anastasia.

"No," replied Alfred, "I do not like blood; but I have a right to claim the perpetual seclusion of this evil-doer; my repose requires it; my health commands it; the law accords me this reparation: otherwise, I leave la France—ma belle France! That is what they'll gain."

And Alfred, swallowed up in his grief, walked majestically out of the lodge, like one of those imposing victims of ancient fatality.

CHAPTER XIX.

CECILY.

BEFORE we relate the conversation between Mrs. Seraphin and Mrs. Pipelet, we will inform the reader that Anastasia, without suspecting the least in the world the virtue and devotion of the notary, blamed extremely the severity she had shown towards Louise Morel and Germain. Naturally she included Mrs.

Seraphin in her reprobation; but like a skilful politician, for reasons which we will show by-and-by, she concealed her feeling for the housekeeper under a most cordial reception. After having formally disapproved of the unworthy conduct of Cabrion, Mrs. Seraphin added, "What has become of M. Bradamanté (Polidori)? Last night I wrote to him—no answer; this morning I came to find him—no one. I hope at this time I shall be more fortunate."

Mrs. Pipelet feigned to be very much vexed.

"Ah!" cried she, "you must have bad luck."

"How?"

"M. Bradamanté has not come in."

"It is insupportable!"

"It is vexing, my poor Mrs. Seraphin."

"I have so much to say to him."

"It is just like fate."

"So much the more, as I have to invent so many pretexts for coming here; for if M. Ferrand ever suspected that I knew a quack, he being so devout and scrupulous, you can judge of the scene."

"Just like Alfred. He is so prudish, that he is startled at everything."

"And you do not know when Bradamanté will come in?"

"He made an appointment for six or seven o'clock in the evening, for he told me to say to the person to call again if he had not returned. Come back this evening, you will be sure to find him."

Anastasia added, to herself, "You can count on this: in one hour he will be on the road to Normandy."

"I will return then to-night," said Mrs. Seraphin, much annoyed; "but I have something else to say to you, my dear Mrs. Pipelet. You know what has happened to this wench of a Louise, whem every one thought so virtuous?"

"Don't speak of it," answered Mrs. Pipelet, raising her eyes with compunction: "it makes my hair stand on end."

"I want to tell you that we have no servant; and that if by chance, you should hear a girl spoken of, virtuous, hard-working, honest, you will be very kind if you will address her to me. Good subjects are so difficult to find, that one has to look on all sides for them."

"Be quite easy, Mrs. Seraphin. If I hear of anyone, I will inform you. Good places are as difficult to find as good subjects;" then she added mentally, "very likely I'd send you a poor girl to be starved to death in your hovel! Your master is too miserly and too wicked—to denounce, in one breath, poor Louise and poor M. Germain!"

"I need not tell you," said Mrs. Seraphin, "how quiet our house is; a girl gains much by getting there, and this Louise must have been an incarnate imp to have turned out so bad, notwithstanding all the good and holy advice M. Ferrand gave her."

"Certainly, so depend upon me: if I hear anyone spoken of that I think will answer, I will send them to you."

"There is one thing more," said Mrs. Seraphin; "M. Ferrand prefers that this servant should have no family, because, you comprehend, having no occasion to go out, she will run less risk; so, if by chance she could be found, monsieur would prefer an orphan, I suppose; in the first place, because it would be a good action, and then because, having no friends, she would have no pretext to go out. This miserable Louise is a good lesson for him, my poor Mrs. Pipelet! That's what makes him so hard to please in the choice of a domestic. Such a scandalous affair in a pious house like ours—how horrid! well, good-bye; to-night, when I go to see M. Bradamanté, I'll call upon Madam Burette."

"Good-bye, Mrs. Seraphin—you will certainly see him to-night."

Mrs. Seraphin took her departure.

"Isn't she crazy after Bradamanté!" said Mrs. Pipelet. "What can she want with him? and wasn't he crazy for fear he should see her before he left for Normandy? I was afraid she wouldn't go, as M. Bradamanté expects the lady who came last night; I couldn't see her, but this time I'll try to unmask her. But who can this lady of M. Bradamante's be? A lady or a common woman? I'd like to know, for I am as curious as a magpie. It is not my fault—I'm made so. It is my character. Ah, hold! an idea, a famous one too—to find out her name! I'll try it. But who comes there? Ah! it is my prince of lodgers. Hail, M. Rudolph," said Mrs. Pipelet, putting herself in the attitude of carrying arms the back of her left hand to her wig.

It was Rudolph, as yet ignorant of the death of M. d'Harville. "Good-day, Madam Pipelet," said he on entering. "Is Mlle. Rigolette at home? I wish to speak to her."

"The poor little puss is always at home, at her work! Does she ever take a holiday?"

"And how is Morel's wife? Does she cheer up any?"

"Yes, Mr. Rudolph, many thanks to you, or to the protector of whom you are the agent, she and her children are so happy now! They are like fish *in* water; they have fire, air, good beds, good food, a nurse to take care of them, without reckoning Little Rigolette, who, working like a little beaver, without appearing to, keeps them under her eye! and besides, a negro doctor has been to see them. Mr. Rudolph, I said to myself, 'Ah! but this is the coalheaver doctor, this black man, he can feel their pulse without soiling his hands! but never mind, colour is skin deep; he seems to be a first-rate hand, all the same!' He ordered a potion for Madame Morel, which relieved her at once."

"Poor woman, she must be very sad."

"Oh! yes, Mr. Rudolph, what else? her husband mad, and then her Louise in prison,

Louise is her heart's grief! for an honest family it is terrible; and when I think that just now Mother Seraphin came here to say such things about her. If I had not a gudgeon to make her swallow, old Seraphin would not have got off so easy; but for a quarter of an hour I gave her fair words. Didn't she have the brass to come and ask me if I knew of any young body to take the place of Louise, at that beggar of a notary's? Aint he close and miserly? Just imagine, they want an orphan, if she can be found. Do you know why, Mr. Rudolph? Because she would never want to go out. But that is not it—trash, a lie! The truth is, that they want to get hold of a girl, who, having no one to advise her, could be ground out of her wages at their pleasure. Isn't it true?"

"Yes, yes," answered Rudolph, in a thoughtful manner.

Learning that Mrs. Seraphin sought an orphan to take the place of Louise, Rudolph foresaw in this circumstance a means, perhaps certain, of obtaining the punishment of the notary. While Mrs. Pipelet was speaking, he arranged in his mind the part a tool of his might play, as a principal instrument in the just punishment which he wished to inflict on the executioner of Louise Morel.

"I was sure you would think as I did," said Madame Pipelet: "yes, I repeat it, and I would sooner die than send any one to them. Am I not right, Mr. Rudolph?"

"Mrs. Pipelet, will you render me a great service?"

"Lord o' mercy! Mr. Rudolph, do you wish me to throw myself across the fire, curl my wig w th boiling oil? or would you prefer I should bite some one? Speak, I am wholly yours! I and my heart are your slaves, except"—

"Make yourself easy, Mrs. Pipelet; this is not what I mean. I want a place for a young orphan. She is a stranger; she has never been at Paris, and I wish to send her to M. Ferrand's."

"You suffocate me. How! in his barrack? to that old miser's?"

"It is nevertheless a situation. If the girl should not like it, she can leave; but, at least, she will for the time earn her living, and I shall be easy on her account."

"Marry! M. Rudolph, its your affair; you are warned. If, notwithstanding, you find the place good, you are the master; and, besides, I must be just—speaking of the notary—if there's something against, there's also something for him. He is as miserly as a dog, hard as an ass, bigoted as a sacristan, it is true; but he is as honest as one can be. He gives small wages, but he pays like a man. The food is bad. In fine, it is a house where one must work like a horse, but where there is no risk of a young girl's reputation. Louise was an exception."

"Madame Pipelet, I am going to confide a secret to your honour."

"On the faith of Anastasia Pipelet, whose maiden name was Galimard, as true as there is a holiness in heaven, and Alfred wears only green coats, I shall be dumb as a fish!"

"You must not say a word to M. Pipelet."

"I swear it on the head of my old darling! If the motive is honest."

"Oh, Mrs. Pipelet!"

"It is between ourselves, my prince of lodgers. Go on."

"The girl of whom I have spoken has committed a fault."

"I twig! If I had not at fifteen married Alfred, I should have perhaps committed fifty—hundreds of faults! I, that you see. I was a regular saltpetre mine unchained! Happily, Pipelet extinguished me in his virtue: without that I should have committed follies. If your girl has only committed one fault, there is yet some hope."

"I think so also. The girl was a servant in Germany, at one of my relative's; the son of this relative has been the accomplice of the fault: you comprehend?"

"Whew! I comprehend—as if I myself had committed the fox-paw myself!"

"The mother drove away the servant; but the young man was mad enough to leave his paternal home, and bring this poor girl to Paris."

"Oh, these young folks"—

"After this came reflections—all the wiser, as the money they had was all gone. My young relative called upon me; I consented to give him enough to return to his mother, but on condition that he should leave this girl here, and I would endeavour to place her."

"I could not have done better for my own son, if Pipelet had been pleased to grant me one."

"I am enchanted with your approbation; only, as the young girl has no recommendations, and is a stranger, it is very difficult to find a place. If you would tell Mrs. Seraphin that one of your relations in Germany had addressed and recommended this young girl to you, and the notary would take her in his service, I should be doubly pleased. Cecily—that is her name—having been only led astray, would be made correct, certainly, in a house so strict as that of the notary. It is for this reason I wish to see her enter the service of M. Ferrand. I need not tell you that, presented by you—a person so respectable"—

"Oh! M. Rudolph"—

"So estimable"—

"Oh, my prince of lodgers"—

"She will be certainly accepted by Madam Seraphin: while, presented by me"—

"Understood! It is as if I presented a young man. Oh, well! done! it suits me. Stick old Seraphin! So much the better! I have a bone to pick with her I will answer for the affair, M. Rudolph! I'll make her see stars at noon. I'll tell her I had a cousin,

ever so long ago, settled in Germany, one of the Galimards—my family name; that I have just received the news that she is defunct, her husband also, and that their daughter, now an orphan, will be on my hands immediately."

"Very well. You will take Cecily yourself to M. Ferrand, without saying anything more to Mrs. Seraphin. As it is twenty years since you have seen your cousin, you will have nothing to answer except that, since her departure for Germany, you have received no news from her."

"Ah, now! but if the young woman only jabbers German?"

"She speaks French perfectly; I will give her her lesson; all you have to do is to recommend her strongly to Mrs. Seraphin; or rather, I think, no—for she would suspect, perhaps, that you wished to force her. You know it suffices often merely to ask for a thing, to have it refused."

"To whom do you tell this? That's the way I always served cajolers. If they had asked nothing, I do not say"—

"That always happens. You must say, then, that Cecily is an orphan and a stranger, very young and very handsome; that she is going to be a heavy charge for you; that you feel but slight affection for her, as you have quarrelled with your cousin, and that you are not much obliged for such a present as she has made you."

"Oh, my! how cunning you are! But be easy—we two'll fix the pair. I say, M. Rudolph, how we understand each other! When I think that if you had been of my age in the time when I was a train of powder—*ma foi*, I don't know—and you?"

"Hush! if M. Pipelet"—

"Oh, yes! poor dear man! You don't know a new infamy of Cabrion's? But I will tell you directly. As to your young girl, be easy; I bet that I'll lead old Seraphin to ask me to place my relation with them."

"If you succeed, my dear Mrs. Pipelet, there is a hundred francs for you. I am not rich, but"—

"Do you mock at me, M. Rudolph? Do you think I do this from interested feelings? It is pure friendship—a hundred francs!"

"But remember, that if I had this girl for a long time under my charge, it would cost me more than that at the end of some months."

"It is only to oblige you that I shall take the hundred francs, M. Rudolph; but it was a famous ticket in the lottery for us when you came to this house. I can cry from the roof, you are the prince of lodgers. Holloa! a hack! it is doubtless the little lady for M. Bradamanté. She came yesterday; I could not see her. I am going to trifle with her, to make her show her face; without counting what I have invented a way to find out her name. You'll see me work; it will amuse you."

"No, no, Mrs. Pipelet, the name and face of this lady is of no importance to me," said Rudolph, retreating to the back part of the lodge.

"Madam!" cried Anastasia, rushing out before the lady, who entered, "where are you going, madam?"

"To M. Bradamanté's," said the female, visibly annoyed at thus being stopped in the passage.

"He is not at home."

"It is impossible; I have an appointment with him."

"He is not at home."

"You are mistaken?"

"I am not mistaken at all," trying all the time to catch a glimpse of her face. "M. Bradamanté has gone out, certainly gone out—very certainly gone out—that is to say, except for a lady."

"Well! it is I! you annoy me; let me pass?"

"Your name, madam? I shall soon know if it is the person M. Bradamanté told me to pass in. If you have not that name, you must step over my body before you shall enter."

"He told you my name?" cried the lady, with as much surprise as inquietude.

"Yes, madam."

"What imprudence!" murmured the lady; then, after a moment's pause, she added impatiently, in a low voice, as if she feared to be overheard, "Well! I am Lady d'Orbigny."

At this name Rudolph started! It was the stepmother of Madam d'Harville. Instead of remaining in the shade, he advanced; and, by the light of the day and the lamp, he easily recognised her, from the description Clemence had more than once given him.

"Lady d'Orbigny!" repeated Mrs. Pipelet, "that's the name; you can go up, madam."

The stepmother of Clemence passed rapidly before the lodge.

"Look at that!" cried the portress, in a triumphant manner; "gammoned the citizen! know her name—she is called d'Orbigny; my means were not bad, M. Rudolph? But what is the matter? You are quite pensive?"

"This lady has been here before?" asked Rudolph.

"Yes, last night; as soon as she was gone, M. Bradamanté went out, probably to take his place in the diligence for to-day; for on his return, last night, he begged me to go with his trunk to the office, as he could not depend upon that little devil Tortillard."

"And where is M. Bradamanté going to? do you know?"

"To Normandy—to Alençon."

Rudolph remembered that the estate of Aubiers, where M. d'Orbigny resided, was situated in Normandy. There could be no doubt the quack was going to see the father of Clemence for no good purpose.

"It is the departure of M. Bradamanté that will finely provoke old Seraphin!" said Madam Pipelet. "She is like a mad wolf after M. César, who avoids her as much as he can; for he told me to conceal from her that he was going to leave to-night; thus, when she returns, she will find nobody at home! I'll profit by this to speak of your young woman. Apropos, how is she called —Cice?"

"Cicely."

"It is the same as if you said Cécile with an *i* at the end. All the same; I must put a piece of paper in my snuff-box to remember this name—Cici—Casi—Cecily, good, I have it."

"Now I go to see Mlle. Rigolette," said Rudolph; and, singularly pre-occupied with the visit of Madam d'Orbigny to Polidori, he ascended to the fourth story.

CHAPTER XX.

RIGOLETTE'S FIRST GRIEF.

RIGOLETTE'S chamber shone with coquettish nicety; a heavy silver watch, placed on the chimney, marked four o'clock; the very cold weather having passed, the economical workwoman had not put any fire in her stove. Hardly could one see from the window any part of the sky, the rough, irregular mass of roofs, garrets, and high chimneys, on the other side of the street, forming the horizon.

Suddenly a ray of the sun, astray as it were, glancing between two high roofs, came to light up, for some moments, with its purple tints, the windows of the room.

Rigolette was working, seated near the casement, sewing, with her feet on a stool, placed before her. Thus, as a noble amuses himself sometimes through caprice, in concealing the walls of a cottage by the most splendid draperies; for a moment the setting sun illuminated the little apartment with a thousand sparkling fires, cast its golden rays on the gray and green chintz curtains, made the highly-polished furniture sparkle, the waxed floor to glisten like brass, and surrounded with gilded wire the bird-cage.

But, alas! notwithstanding the provoking joyousness of this ray of the sun, its two canaries flew about with an unquiet air, and contrary to custom, did not sing.

It was because, contrary to custom, also, Rigolette did not sing. None of the three warbled without the others. Almost always the fresh and matinal song of one awoke the song of the others, who, more lazy, did not leave their nests at so early an hour. Then it was a challenge, a contest of clear, sonorous, brilliant, silvery notes, in which the birds did not always have the advantage.

Rigolette sang no more, because, for the first time in her life, she experienced a *sorrow*.

Until then, the sight of the misery of the Morels had often afflicted her, but such scenes are too familiar to the poorer classes to make any durable impression.

After having each day assisted these unfortunates as much as was in her power, sincerely wept with them, and for them, the girl felt affected, yet satisfied; affected with their misfortunes, and satisfied with her conduct towards them. But this was no *sorrow*.

Soon the natural gaiety of her character resumed its empire. And besides, without egotism, but from comparison, she found herself so happy in her little chamber, on leaving the horrible den of the Morels, that her ephemeral sadness was soon dissipated.

Before we inform the reader of the cause of the first grief of Rigolette, we wish to assure him completely as to the virtue of this young girl. We regret to use the word virtue—a grave, pompous, and solemn word, which always carries along with it ideas of a grievous sacrifice, of a painful contest with the passions, austere meditations on the end of things here below. Such was not the virtue of Rigolette. She had neither struggled nor meditated. She had worked, laughed and sung.

It depended on a question of time. She had no leisure to be in love.

Before all—gay, industrious, managing; order, work, gaiety, had unknown to her, defended, sustained and saved her. Perhaps this morality will be found light, easy, and joyous; but what matters the cause provided the effect subsists? What matters the direction of the roots, if the flower blooms brilliant and perfumed. But let us descend from our Utopian sphere, and return to the cause of Rigolette's first grief.

Except Germain, a good and serious young man, the neighbours of the grisette had taken, at first, her familiarity and neighbourly kindness for very significant encouragement; but these gentlemen had been obliged to acknowledge, with as much surprise as vexation, that they found in Rigolette an amiable and gay companion for their Sunday recreations, a kind neighbour, and "nice little girl," but nothing more. Their surprise and their vexation quailed by degrees to the frank and charming disposition of the grisette, and her neighbours were proud on Sunday to have on their arm a pretty girl who did them honour (Rigolette cared little for appearances), and who only cost the partaking of their modest pleasures, which her presence and sprightliness enhanced. Besides, the dear girl was so easily contented; in the days of penury she dined so well and so gaily on a piece of hot oake, nipped with all the force of her little white teeth; after which she amused herself so much with a walk on the boulevards or streets.

François Germain alone founded no foolish hopes on the girl's familiarity; either from

penetration or delicacy of mind, he saw at once all that could be agreeable in the mode of living offered by Rigolette. That which, of course, would happen, happened. He became desperately in love with his neighbour, without daring to speak of this love. Far from imitating his predecessors, who, soon convinced of the vanity of their pursuits, had consoled themselves elsewhere, Germain had deliciously enjoyed his intimacy with the girl, passing with her not only Sundays, but every evening that he was not occupied.

During these long hours, Rigolette had conducted herself, as always, lively and gay! Germain tender, attentive, serious, and often a little melancholy. This sadness was the only inconvenience; for his manners, naturally uncommon, could not be compared to the ridiculous pretensions of Girandeau, the travelling clerk, nor to the noisy eccentricities of Cabrion; M. Girandeau by his inexhaustible loquacity, and the painter by his hilarity not less so, had the advantage of Germain, whose gentle gravity awed a little his lively neighbour.

Rigolette had not, until now, any marked preference for either of her three lovers; but as she was not wanting in judgment, she found that Germain alone united all the qualities necessary to make a reasonable woman happy.

These antecedents disposed of, we will say why Rigolette was sad, and why neither she nor her birds sang.

Her round, blooming face was rather pale; her large black eyes, ordinarily bright and sparkling, were cast down and dull; her expression showed unaccustomed fatigue. She had worked more than half the night. From time to time she regarded sadly a letter placed open upon a table beside her; this letter was from Germain, and contained what follows:

"Conciergerie Prison.

"MADEMOISELLE.—The place whence I write will tell you the extent of my misfortune. I am incarcerated as a thief—I am criminal in the eyes of the world, though I dare to write to you. It would be frightful for me to think that you also looked upon me as a degraded and guilty being. I implore you, do not condemn me before having read this letter. If you cast me off, this last blow will overwhelm me quite.

"For some time past I have not lived in the Rue du Temple, but I knew through poor Louise that the Morel family, in whom we were so much interested, were more and more wretched. Alas! my pity for these poor poople has ruined me! I do not repent it, but my fate is a cruel one. Yesterday, I remained quite late at M. Ferrand's, occupied with some pressing writings. In the room where I worked was a desk; each day my patron locked up in it the work I had done. This night he appeared restless and agitated; he said to me, 'Do not go until these accounts are finished; you will place them in the desk, of which I leave you the key,' and he went out.

"My work being finished, I opened the drawer to put it away; mechanically my eyes fell upon an open letter, where I read the name of Jerôme Morel, the artisan. I confess, seeing that it referred to that unfortunate man, I had the indiscretion to read this letter; I thus learned that the artisan was to be arrested the next morning for a note of thirteen hundred francs, at the suit of M. Ferrand, who, under an assumed name, would cause him to be imprisoned. This notice was from the agent of my patron. I knew the situation of the family well enough to foresee what a horrible blow this would be for them. I was as sorry as I was indignant. Unfortunately, I saw in the same drawer an open box containing some gold; there was about two thousand francs. At this moment I heard Louise on the staircase: without reflecting on the gravity of my action, profiting by the occasion which chance offered, I took thirteen hundred francs; I went into the passage and placed the money into the hand of Louise, telling her, 'Your father is to be arrested to-morrow at daylight for thirteen hundred francs; here they are; save him, but do not say you had this money from me. M. Ferrand is a bad man.'

"You see, Mlle., my intention was good, though my conduct was culpable; I conceal nothing, Now hear my excuse.

"During a long time, by economy, I have saved and placed at a banker's the small sum of fifteen hundred francs. About a week ago he notified me, that the term of his obligation towards me being arrived, he held my funds subject to my order, if I did not wish them to remain with him.

"I thus possessed more than I took from the notary. I could the next day replace it; but the cashier of the banker did not reach his office before twelve o'clock, and at daybreak they were to arrest poor Morel. It was necessary to place him in a situation to pay, otherwise, even if I were to go and take him from prison, the arrest might have already killed his wife; besides, the very considerable expenses attending this would have been at the cost of the artisan. You comprehend, that all these misfortunes would not have happened, if I could have returned the thirteen hundred francs before M. Ferrand discovered their loss.

"I left the house, no longer under the impression of indignation and pity which had made me act in this manner. I reflected on all the dangers of my position; a thousand fears assailed me. I knew the severity of the notary; he could, after my departure, return and go to the bureau, find out the *theft*; for in his eyes, to the eyes of everybody, it is a theft.

"These ideas quite upset me; although it

was late, I ran to the banker's to beg him to return my money instantly. I should have explained this extraordinary demand; afterward I would have returned to M. Ferrand, and replaced the money I had taken.

"The banker, by a fatal chance, had been for two days at Belleville, his country house. I awaited the daylight with increasing agony; at length I arrived at Belleville. Everything seemed leagued against me; the banker had left for Paris; I flew back, I got my money; I went to M. Ferrand's—all was discovered.

"But this is only a part of my misfortunes; now the notary accuses me of having stolen fifteen thousand francs in notes, which were, he said, in the drawer with the two thousand francs in gold. It is a false accusation—an infamous lie! I avow myself guilty of the first charge; but by all that is sacred, I swear to you, mademoiselle, that I am innocent of the second. I have seen no bills in the drawer; there was only the gold, as I said before.

"Such is the truth, mademoiselle; I am under the charge of an overwhelming accusation, and yet I affirm that you ought to think me incapable of telling a falsehood. But you will believe me? Alas! as M. Ferrand told me, he who has stolen a small sum can easily steal a large one, and his words deserve no confidence.

"I have always found you so good and devoted to the unfortunate, mademoiselle, I know you are so faithful and frank, that your heart will guide you, I hope, in the appreciation of the truth—I ask nothing more. Give faith to my words, and you will find me as much to be pitied as blamed; for I repeat, my intention was good; circumstances impossible to foresee have ruined me.

"Oh, Mlle. Rigolotte, I am very unhappy. If you knew what kind of people I am destined to live among until the day of my trial. Yesterday they took me to a place which is called the station-house of the Prefecture of Police. I cannot tell you what I experienced when, after having mounted a gloomy staircase, I arrived before a door with an iron wicket, which they opened, and soon closed upon me. I was so much troubled, that at first I could distinguish nothing. A hot, disagreeable air struck me in the face; I heard a great noise of voices mingled with sinister laughs, accents of rage and low songs; I held myself immovable near the door, looking at the stone flaggings, daring neither to advance nor raise my eyes, believing that everyone was looking at me. They did not trouble themselves about me: one prisoner more or less is of no consequence to them; at length I raised my head. What horrible figures! how many clothed in rags! how many ragged clothes soiled with mud! All the externals of vice and misery. There were about forty or fifty, seated, standing, or lying on benches fastened to the walls; vagabonds, robbers, assassins, in fine, all who had been arrested that night or day.

"When they perceived me, I found a sad consolation in seeing that they did not recognise me as one of their fellows. Some of them looked at me with an insolent and jeering air; then they began to talk among themselves, in a low tone, and in a hideous language I did not comprehend. At the end of a short time, the most audacious of them came and struck me on the shoulder, and asked me for some money to pay my footing.

"I gave them some money, in hopes to purchase repose: it was not enough; they required more; I refused. Then several of them surrounded me, loading me with threats and insults; they were about to throw themselves upon me, when happily, attracted by the noise, a keeper entered; I complained to him; he made them give up the money I had given them, and told me that, if I wished, I could for a small amount be put alone in a cell. I accepted with gratitude, and left these bandits in the midst of their threats for the future. The keeper placed me in a cell, where I passed the rest of the night. It is hence that I write you this morning, Mlle. Rigolette. Immediately after my examination, I shall be conducted to another prison, which is called La Force, where I fear I shall meet many of my lock-up companions. The keeper, interested by my grief and tears, has promised me to send you this letter, although it is strictly forbidden. I expect, Mlle. Rigolette, a last service of your old friendship, if now you should not blush at this friendship.

"If you are willing to grant my demand, here it is.

"You will receive with this a small key and a line for the porter of the house where I reside, Boulevard Saint Dénis, No. 11. I inform him that you can dispose of all that belongs to me, and that he must obey your orders. He will show you my room. You will have the kindness to open my secretary with the key I send you; you will find a large envelope covering many papers, which I wish you to take care of; one of them was destined for you, as you will see by the address; others have been written concerning you, in our happy days. Do not be angry—you never else would have known it.

"I beg you also to take the small sum of money which is in the secretary, also a sachet of satin, inclosing a little cravat of orange silk, that you wore on our last Sunday walk, and gave me the day I left the Rue du Temple. I wish that, with the exception of some linen, which you will send to La Force, you would sell the furniture and effects I possess: acquitted or condemned, I shall not be the less ruined and obliged to leave Paris. Where shall I go? What are my resources? Heaven only knows!

"Madam Bouvard, a saleswoman in the Temple, who has already sold and bought for me, will doubtless arrange all this: she's an

honest woman; this arrangement will spare you much embarrassment, for I know how precious your time is.

"I have paid my rent in advance; I beg you to give a small gratuity to the porter. Pardon me, mademoiselle, for imposing on you with these details, but you are the only person in the world to whom I dare and can address myself.

"I might have asked this service from one of the clerks at M. Ferrand's, but I feared his discretion respecting sundry papers; many of them concerning you, as I have already told you; others have reference to some sad events of my life.

"Oh! believe me, Mlle. Rigolette, if you grant it, this last proof of your former affection will be my sole consolation in the great trouble which crushes me; in spite of myself, I hope you will not refuse me.

"I ask, also, permission to write you sometimes—it will be so soothing, so precious, to be able to pour out, to disclose to a benevolent heart, the sorrows which overwhelm me.

"Alas! I am alone in the world; no one feels any interest in me. This isolated condition was always painful—judge now what it is!

"And yet I am honest; and I have the consciousness of never having injured anyone; of having always, even at the peril of my life, shown my aversion for evil, as you will see by the papers, which I beg you to keep and read. But when I say this, who will believe me? M. Ferrand is respected by everybody; his reputation is well established; he will crush me; I resign myself, in advance, to my fate.

"In brief, Mlle. Rigolette, if you believe me, you will not have, I hope, any contempt for me; you will pity me, and you will sometimes think of a sincere friend; then, if I cause you much—much pity, perhaps you will push your generosity so far as to come, some day—*a Sunday* (alas! what recollections does not the word awaken)—to brave the reception-room of my prison.

"But no, no! to see you in such a place—I never can dare. Yet you are so kind—that—

"I am obliged to stop, and send you this, with the key and the note to the porter, which I shall write in haste, as the keeper has come to tell me I am to be taken before the judge. Adieu, adieu, Mlle. Rigolette.

"Do not cast me off. I have no hope but in you—in you alone.

"FRANCOIS GERMAIN.

"P.S.—If you answer, address your letter to the prison of La Force."

The reader can now comprehend the cause of the first grief of La Rigolette. Her excellent heart was profoundly affected at a calamity of which she had not had until then any suspicion. She believed implicitly in the entire veracity of the story of Germain. Not very severe, she even found that her old neighbour enormously exaggerated his fault. To save an unfortunate father, he had taken the money, which he knew he could return. This action, in the eyes of the grisette, was only generous.

By one of those inconsistencies natural to women, and above all, to those of her class, this girl, who until then had felt for Germain, as for her other neighbours, a joyous and cordial friendship, now acknowledged a decided preference.

As soon as she knew he was unfortunate, unjustly accused, and a prisoner, she thought no more of his rivals.

With Rigolette it was not yet love; it was a lively, sincere affection, filled with commiseration and resolute devotion: a very new sentiment for her, from the bitterness which was joined to it. Such was her mental situation when Rudolph entered her room, after having discreetly knocked at the door.

"Good-day, my neighbour," said Rudolph; "I hope I do not disturb you?"

"No, neighbour; I am, on the contrary, very glad to see you, for I have much sorrow!"

"Why do I find you pale? you seem to have been weeping!"

"I should think I have wept! There is reason for it. Poor Germain! Here, read;" and Rigolette handed to Rudolph the letter. "If this is not enough to break one's heart! You told me you were interested in him. Now is the time to show it," added she, while Rudolph read attentively. "Is this villain, Ferrand, thirsting for the blood of everybody? First it was Louise, now it is Germain. Oh! I am not cruel; but if some misfortune should happen to this notary I should be content! To accuse such an honest young man of having stolen one thousand three hundred francs! Germain! truth and honesty itself, and then so regular, so mild, so sad—is he not to be pitied, among all these scoundrels—in prison! Oh! M. Rudolph, from to-day I begin to see that all is not *couleur de rose* in life."

"And what do you mean to do, my neighbour?"

"Do? why, everthing he asks, and as soon as possible. I should have already been off, but for this work, which I must finish and take to the Rue Saint Honoré, as I go to Germain's room to get the papers he speaks of. I have passed a part of the night in working, so as to gain some hours in advance. I am going to have so many things to do, besides my work, that I must get in readiness. In the first place, Madam Morel wishes me to see Louise in her prison. It is, perhaps, very difficult, but I will try. Unfortunately, I do not know who to address myself to."

"I have thought of that."

"You, my neighbour?"

"Here is a magistrate's order."

"What happiness! Can you not get me one also for the prison of this unfortunate Germain? it will give him so much pleasure."

"I will give you, also, the means to see Germain."

"Oh, thank you, M. Rudolph."

"You are not afraid, then, to go to the prison?"

"Very certain my heart will beat the first time. But never mind. When Germain was happy, did I not always find him ready to anticipate all my wishes? To take me to the theatre, or a walk? to read to me at night? to assist me in arranging my flowers? to wax my floor? Well! now he is in trouble, it is my turn; a poor little mouse like me can't do much, I know; but all I can do I will do—he can count on it; he shall see whether I am a good friend! M. Rudolph, there is one thing that vexes me; it is his suspicion—he believes me capable of despising him! I ask you why? This old miser of a notary accuses him of theft; but what is that to me? I know it is not true. The letter of Germain proves as clear as day that he is innocent, whom I should never have thought guilty? Only to see him, to know him, shows he is incapable of a wrong action. One must be as wicked as M. Ferrand to maintain such false assertions."

"Bravo, neighbour. I like your indignation!"

"Oh! stop—I wish I was a man, to go see this notary, and say to him, 'Oh! you maintain that Germain has robbed you; well, look here, take that, you old liar, he won't steal this from you.' And I'd beat him to a mummy."

"You'd have very expeditious justice," said Rudolph, smiling at the animation of Rigolette.

"It is so revolting; and, as Germain says in his letter, everybody will take the master's part against him, because his master is rich, and thought much of, while Germain is a poor young man without protection; unless you come to his assistance, M. Rudolph, who know so many benevolent persons. Can nothing be done?"

"He must wait for his trial. Once acquitted, as I think he will be, numerous proofs of interest will be shown him, I assure you. But listen, my neighbour, I know from experience that I can count on your discretion."

"Oh, yes, M. Rudolph. I have never been a babbler."

"Well! no one must know, even Germain himself must be ignorant, that he has friends who are watching over him, for he has friends."

"Really?"

"Very powerful and very devoted."

"It would give him so much courage to know it!"

"Doubtless; but perhaps he could not keep the secret. Then, M. Ferrand, alarmed, would be on his guard, his suspicions aroused; and as he is very cunning, he would make it difficult to get at him; which would be lamentable, for not only must the innocence of Germain be proved, but his calumniator unmasked."

"I understand you, M. Rudolph."

"Just so with Louise; I bring you this permission to see her, so that you can tell her not to speak to anyone of what she has revealed to me. She will know what this means."

"That is sufficient, M. Rudolph."

"In a word, Louise must be careful not to complain in her prison of the conduct of her master; it is very important. But she must conceal nothing from the lawyer who will be sent by me to prepare for her defence; recommend all this to her."

"Be quite easy, neighbour; I will forget nothing. I have a good memory. But I speak of kindness, when it is you who are good and generous! If anyone's in trouble, you are there at once!"

"I have told you, neighbour, I am only a poor clerk. When, in roving about, I find good people who deserve protection, I inform a benevolent person who has all confidence in me, and they are assisted."

"Where do you lodge now that you have given up your room to the Morels?"

"I lodge—in furnished lodgings."

"Oh, how I detest that. To be where everybody else has been—it is as if everybody had been in your own room."

"I am only there at night, and then"—

"I conceive—it is less disagreeable. My home, M. Rudolph, rendered me so happy; I had arranged a life so tranquil, that I should not have believed it possible to have a sorrow. Yet you see! No, I cannot tell you what a blow the misfortunes of Germain have caused me. I have seen the Morels and others—much to be pitied, it is true; but misery is misery. Among poor folks they expect it; it does not surprise them, and they help one another as they can. But to see a poor young man, honest and good, who has been your friend for a long time, accused of theft, and imprisoned pell-mell with rogues and cut-throats! Oh, M. Rudolph! it is true I have no strength against this; it is a misfortune I have never thought of; it upsets me."

Rigolette's large eyes filled with tears.

"Courage, courage! your gaiety will return when your friend is acquitted."

"Oh, he must be acquitted! They will only have to read to the judges the letter which he has written me—that will be enough, will it not, M. Rudolph?"

"In reality, this simple and touching letter has all the marks of truth. You must let me take a copy; it will be useful in his defence."

"Certainly, M. Rudolph. If I did not write like a real cat, in spite of the lessons Germain gave me, I should propose to copy it for you; but my writing is so coarse, so crooked, and, besides, there are so many—so many faults."

"I only ask you to lend me this letter until to-morrow."

"There it is, neighbour; but you will take good care of it? I have burned all the *billets*-

doux which M. Cabrion and M. Girandeau wrote me at the commencement of our acquaintance, with bleeding hearts and doves on the top of the paper; but this poor letter of Germain, I will take good care of; and others also, if he writes them. For, in truth, M. Rudolph, it is a proof in my favour that he asks these little services."

"Without doubt it proves that you are the best little friend that one can have. But, I reflect—instead of going by-and-by alone to M. Germain's, shall I accompany you?"

"With pleasure, neighbour. Night approaches, and I prefer not to be alone in the streets after dark, especially as I have to go near the Palais Royal. But to go so far will be tiresome and fatiguing to you, perhaps?"

"Not at all; we will take a hack."

"Really! Oh, how it would amuse me to go in a carriage, if I had not so much sorrow. And I must have sorrow, for this is the first day since I lived here that I have not sung. My birds are all astonished. Poor little things! they do not know what it means; two or three times Papa Crêtu has sung a little to entice me. I wished to amuse him; but after a moment I began to weep; Ramonette then tried, but I could answer no more."

"What singular names you have given your birds—Papa Crêtu, Ramonette?"

"M. Rudolph, my birds are the joy of my solitude; they are my best friends. I have given them the names of good people who were the joy of my childhood, my best friends. Without reckoning, to finish the resemblance, that Papa Crêtu and Ramonette were as gay and tuneful as the birds of heaven. My adopted parents were thus called. They are ridiculous names for birds, I know; but it only concerns me. Now, it was on this very subject that I saw Germain had a good heart."

"He had, eh?"

"Certainly; M. Girondeau and M. Cabrion—M. Cabrion, above all—were for ever making jokes on the names of my birds. 'To call a canary Papa Crêtu, did you ever?' M. Cabrion never finished, and then he would laugh—such laughs. 'If it were a cock,' said he, 'very well, you might call it Crêtu (combed). It is the same with the other one; Ramonette sounds too much like Ramoneur (chimney-sweep).' At length he made me so angry that I would not go out with him for two Sundays, just to teach him; and I told him, very seriously, that if he recommenced his jokes, which were unpleasant to me, we should never go out together again."

"What a courageous resolution!"

"It cost me a good deal, M. Rudolph—I looked so eagerly for my Sunday excursions. I had a sorrowful heart, I tell you, to remain home all alone of a fine day; but never mind, I preferred rather to sacrifice my Sunday than to continue to hear M. Cabrion make fun of what I respected. Except for this, and the ideas attached to it, I would have preferred to give other names to my birds. There is, above all, one name I should have loved to adoration—Humming-Bird. Well, I cannot do it, because I never shall call my birds otherwise than Crêtu and Ramonette; it would seem to me that I sacrificed them, that I forgot my kind adopted parents—wouldn't it, M. Rudolph?"

"You are right—a thousand times right. Germain did not make fun of these names?"

"On the contrary; only the first time it appeared droll to him as to everyone else—it is very simple; but when I explained my reasons, as I had explained them to M. Cabrion, the tears came into his eyes. From that day I said, 'M. Germain has a kind heart; he has nothing against him but his sadness.' And do you see, M. Rudolph, that he has brought me misfortune to reproach him for his sadness. Then I did not comprehend how one could be sad. Now I comprehend it but too well. But now my work is finished, will you give me my shawl, neighbour? It is not cold enough for a cloak, is it?"

"We shall go in a carriage, and I will bring you back."

"It is true, we shall go and return quicker; it will be so much time gained."

"But, on reflection, how are you going to manage? Your work will suffer from your visit to the prisons?"

"Oh, no, no! I have laid my plans. In the first place, I have my Sundays; I will go and see Louise and Germain on these days—it will serve me for a walk and recreation; then, in the week, I shall go to the prison once or twice; each time will cost me three good hours a day. Well, to make up for this, I will work one hour more each day, and I will go to bed at twelve o'clock instead of eleven: that will give me a clear gain of seven or eight hours each week, which I can use in going to see Louise and Germain. You see, I am richer than I appear to be," added Rigolette, smiling.

"And do you not fear this will fatigue you?"

"Bah! I can do it—one can do anything; and, besides, it will not last for ever."

"Here is your shawl, neighbour. I shall not be so indiscreet as to bring my lips too close to this charming neck."

"Oh, neighbour! take care, you prick me."

"Come, the pin is crooked."

"Well, take another—there, on the pincushion. Oh, I forget! Will you do me a favour, neighbour?"

"Command, neighbour."

"Make me a good pen, very coarse, so that I can, on my return, write to poor Germain that his commissions are executed. He shall have my letter to-morrow morning early."

"And where are your pens?"

"There, on the table; the knife is in the drawer. Stop, I am going to light my candle, for it grows quite dark."

"I shall want it to mend the pen."

"And, besides, I can't see to tie my bonnet."

Rigolette took a match and lit an end of candle which was in a very shining candlestick.

"Dear me! wax candle, neighbour—what luxury!"

"The little I burn costs me a trifle more than a tallow candle, but it is so much neater."

"Not much dearer?"

"Oh, no. I buy these ends of candles by the pound, and a half-pound serves me a month."

"But," said Rudolph, mending the pen carefully, while the grisette tied her bonnet before the glass, "I see no preparations for your dinner?"

"I haven't a shadow of hunger. I took a cup of milk this morning; I will take another to-night, with a little bread; I shall have enough."

"Will you not come and eat dinner with me when we come away from Germain?"

"I thank you, neighbour; I have my heart too full: another time with pleasure. What do you say to the evening of the day that poor Germain comes out of prison? I invite myself, and afterward we will go to the play. Is it agreed?"

"It is, neighbour; I assure you that I shall not forget this engagement. But to-day you refuse me?"

"Yes, M. Rudolph; I should be too stupid to-day; besides, it would take up too much time. Only think—it is now, if ever, that I must not be lazy."

"Come, I give up this pleasure for to-day."

"Here, take my bundle, neighbour; go before, I will shut the door."

"Here is an excellent pen—now, your bundle."

"Take care you don't tumble it—it is poult de soie—it shows the folds—hold it in your hand—that way—lightly. Well, pass on, I will light you."

Rudolph descended, preceded by Rigolette. As they passed the lodge they saw Pipelet, who, with his arms hanging down, advanced towards them from the bottom of the alley. In one hand he held the sign, which announced to the public that he would "deal in friendship" with Cabrion; and in the other, the portrait of the infernal painter.

The despair of Alfred was so overwhelming that his chin rested on his breast, and nothing could be seen but the top of his hat. On seeing him approach, with his head down, towards Rudolph and Rigolette, one would have said it was a goat or a negro butt preparing for combat. Anastasia appeared on the threshold, and cried, at the sight of her husband, "Well, old darling! here you are, hey? What did the commissary say to you? Alfred, pay attention; now you are going to poke yourself against my prince of lodgers. Who has stolen your eyes? Pardon, M. Rudolph, that beggar Cabrion stupifies him more and more—he certainly will make him turn to a jackass, my poor love! Alfred, answer!"

At this voice, so dear to his heart, Pipelet raised his head; his features were imprinted with a melancholy bitterness.

"What did the commissary say to you?" repeated Anastasia.

"Anastasia, we must collect the little that we possess, clasp our friends in our arms, pack our trunks, and expatriate ourselves from France—from my 'belle France!'—for, sure now of impunity, the monster is capable of pursuing me everywhere."

"Then, the commissary!"

"The commissary!" cried Pipelet, with savage indignation; "the commissary laughed in my face."

"Your face! an aged man, who has so respectable an air, that you'd look as stupid as a goose if one did not know your virtues."

"Well, notwithstanding that, when I had respectfully deposed before him my heap of complaints and griefs against this infernal Cabrion, this magistrate, after looking at and laughing—yes, laughing—I say, laughing indecently—over the sign and portrait which I produced as justificatory of my complaint, replied, 'My good man, this Cabrion is a funny fellow—a jester—pay no attention to his jokes. I advise you now, in a friendly manner, to laugh at them, for really there is cause.' 'To laugh!' cried I; 'to laugh! but grief is devouring me—my existence is embittered by those scoundrels—they pester me—they will cause me to lose my reason—I demand that they be locked up—exiled, at least, from my street.' At these words the commissary smiled, and obligingly showed me the door. I understood this gesture of the magistrate, and here I am."

"Magistrate of nothing at all!" cried Mrs. Pipelet.

"All is finished! Anastasia, all is finished! No more hope! There is no longer any justice in France! I am atrociously sacrificed!" and by way of peroration Pipelet threw, with all his strength, the portrait and sign to the end of the alley. Rodolph and Rigolette had, in the obscurity, slightly smiled at Pipelet's despair. After having addressed some words of consolation to Alfred, whom Anastasia was calming in the best way she could, the "prince of lodgers" left the house of the Rue du Temple with Rigolette, and got into a hackney coach to go to the residence of François Germain.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE WILL.

FRANCOIS GERMAIN lived on the Boulevard Saint Denis, No. 11. During the long ride from the Rue du Temple to the Rue Saint Honoré, where the woman lived who furnished Rigo-

lette with work, Rudolph was able to appreciate still more the girl's excellent feelings. Like all characters instinctively good and devoted, she was not conscious of the delicacy and generosity of her conduct, which seemed to her quite natural.

Nothing would have been easier for Rudolph than to have made a liberal provision for Rigolette, as well for her present wants as the future, so that she could have gone charitably to console Louise and Germain, without counting the time she lost in these visits from her work, her only resource; but the prince feared to weaken the merit of the grisette's devotion in rendering it too easy; quite decided to recompense the rare and charming qualities which he had discovered in her, he wished to follow her to the end of this new and interesting trial. At the end of an hour, the carriage, on its return from the Rue Saint Honoré, stopped on the Boulevard Saint Denis, No. 11, before a house of modest appearance.

Rudolph assisted Rigolette to alight: she entered the porter's lodge, and communicated to him the intentions of Germain, without forgetting the promised gratuity. From his amenity of disposition, the clerk was everywhere loved. The *confrère* of Pipelet was much concerned to learn that the house should lose so honest and quiet a lodger: such were his expressions. The grisette, furnished with a light, rejoined her companion; the porter was to follow, after a little while, to receive instructions. The chamber of Germain was on the fourth story. On arriving at the door, Rigolette said to Rudolph, giving him the key, "Here, neighbour, open—my hand trembles too much. You will laugh at me; but, in thinking that poor Germain will never return here, it seems to me I am about to enter a chamber of the dead."

"Come, be reasonable, now, neighbour—have no such ideas!"

"I was wrong, but it was stronger than I," and she wiped away a tear.

Without being as much moved as his companion, Rudolph, nevertheless experienced a painful impression on entering the modest apartment. He knew that the unfortunate young man must have passed many sad hours in this solitude. Rigolette placed the light on a table. Nothing could be more plain than the furniture of this sleeping room, composed of a bed, chest of drawers, a secretary of black walnut, four straw-bottomed chairs, and a table; white cotton curtains covered the windows and the bed recess; the only ornaments on the mantelpiece were a decanter and a glass. From the appearance of the bed, which was made, it could be seen that Germain had thrown himself upon it without taking off his clothes the night preceding his arrest.

"Poor fellow," said Rigolette, sadly, examining, with interest, the interior of the chamber; "it is easy to see that he no longer has me for a neighbour. It is in order, but not neat; there is dust everywhere, the curtains are smoked, the windows are dirty, the floor is not washed. Oh! what a difference! Rue du Temple was not handsome, but it was more gay, because everything shone with neatness, like my own room."

"It was because you were there, to give your advice."

"But see, now," cried Rigolette, showing the bed, "he did not go to rest the other night, so much was he disturbed. Look here! this handkerchief, which he has left, has been steeped in tears. That is plain to be seen;" and she took it, adding, "Germain has kept a little orange silk cravat of mine, which I gave him when we were happy; I am sure he will not be angry."

"On the contrary, he will be very happy at this proof of your affection."

"Now let us think of serious matters; I will make a package of linen, which I shall find in the drawers, to take to him in prison; Mother Bouvard, who I shall send here tomorrow, will manage the rest. First, however, I'll open the secretary and take out the papers and money which M. Germain begged me keep for him."

"But while I think of it," said Rudolph, "Louise Morel gave me, yesterday, one thousand three hundred francs in gold, which Germain had given her to pay the debt of her father, which I had already done; I have this money; it belongs to Germain, since he has paid back the notary; I will give it to you; you can add it to the rest."

"As you please, M. Rudolph; yet I would rather not have so large a sum with me at home, there are so many robbers nowadays. Papers are very well—there is nothing to fear; but money is dangerous."

"Perhaps you are right, neighbour; shall I take charge of this sum? If Germain has need of anything, you must let me know at once. I will leave you my address, and I will send you what he wants."

"I should not have dared to ask this service from you; it will be much better, neighbour. I will give you also the money I shall receive from the sale of his effects. Let us see the papers," said the girl, opening the secretary and several drawers. "Ah, it is probably this. Here is a large envelope. Oh, my gracious! look here, M. Rudolph, how sad it is what's written on this." And she read, in a faltering tone,

"In case I should die a violent death, or otherwise, I beg the person who should open this secretary to carry these papers to Mlle. Rigolette, seamstress, Rue du Temple, No. 17"

"Can I break the seal, M. Rudolph?"

"Doubtless; does he not say that among these papers there is one particularly addressed to you?"

The girl broke the seal. Several papers

were inclosed; one of them, bearing the superscription, "*To Mademoiselle Rigolette*," contained these words: "Mademoiselle — When you read this letter, I shall no longer exist. If, as I fear, I die a violent death, in falling a victim to wilful murder, some information, under the title of *Notes of my Life*, may give a clue to my assassins."

"Ah! M. Rudolph," said Rigolette, "I am no longer astonished that he was so sad. Poor Germain! always pursued by such ideas!"

"Yes; he must have been much afflicted. But his worst days are over, believe me."

"I hope so, M. Rudolph. But, however, to be in prison, accused of robbery."

"Be comforted. Once his innocence recognised, instead of falling into an isolated state, he will find friends. You, in the first place; then a beloved mother, from whom he has been separated since his childhood."

"His mother! He has still a mother?"

"Yes. She thinks him lost to her. Judge of her joy when she will see him again. Do not speak to him of his mother. I confide this secret to you, because you interest yourself so generously in his favour."

"I thank you, M. Rudolph; you may be assured I will keep your secret," and Rigolette continued the reading of his letter:

"If you will, mademoiselle, look over these notes, you will see that I have been all my life very unhappy, except during the time I passed with you. What I should never have dared to tell you, you will find written here, entitled '*My sole days of happiness.*'

"Almost every evening, on leaving you, I thus poured out the consoling thoughts that your affection inspired, and which alone tempered the bitterness of my life. What was friendship when with you, became love when absent from you. I have concealed this until this moment, when I shall be no more for you than perhaps a sad souvenir. My destiny was so unhappy, that I should never have spoken to you of this sentiment; although sincere and profound, it would only have made you unhappy.

"One wish alone remains to be fulfilled, and I hope that you will accomplish it. I have seen with what admirable courage you work, and how much method and economy was necessary for you to live on the small amount you earn so industriously. Often, without telling you, I have trembled in thinking that a malady, caused, perhaps, by excess of labour, might reduce you to a situation so frightful that I could not even think of it without alarm. It is very grateful to me to think that I can at least spare you the horrors, and, perhaps, in a great degree, the miseries, which you, in the thoughtlessness of youth, do not foresee, happily."

"What does he mean, M. Rudolph?" said Rigolette, astonished.

"Continue; we shall see."

"I know on how little you can live, and what a resource the smallest sum would be to you in a time of difficulty. I am very poor, but, by economy, I have set aside one thousand five hundred francs, deposited at a banker's; it is all that I possess. By my will, which you will find here, I bequeath it to you; accept it from a friend, a good brother, who is no more."

"Oh! M. Rudolph," said Rigolette, bursting into tears, and giving the letter to the prince, "this gives me too much pain. Good Germain, thus to think of me! Oh! what a heart! what an excellent heart!"

"Worthy and good young man!" replied Rudolph, with emotion. "But calm yourself, my child. Germain is not dead; this anticipation will only serve as a witness of his love for you."

"It is true. To be beloved by so good a young man is very flattering, is it not, M. Rudolph?"

"And some day, perhaps, you will participate in this love?"

"M. Rudolph, it is very trying; poor Germain is so much to be pitied! I'll put myself in his place—if at the moment when I thought myself abandoned, despised by all the world, a person, a good friend, came to me, still more kind than I could hope for — I should be so happy!" After a moment's pause, Rigolette resumed with a sigh, "On the other hand, we are both so poor, that perhaps it would not be reasonable. Look here, M. Rudolph, I do not wish to think of that; perhaps I am mistaken; but I will do all I can for Germain, as long as he remains in prison. Once free, it will always be time enough to see if it is love or friendship I feel for him; then if it is love, neighbour, it will be love. But it grows late, M. Rudolph; will you collect these papers, while I make up a bundle of linen? Oh! I forgot the sachet inclosing the little orange cravat, which I have given him. It is in this drawer, without a doubt. Oh! see how pretty it is, all embroidered! Poor Germain has guarded it like a relic! I well remember the last time I wore it, and when I gave it to him. He was so happy, so happy."

At this moment some one knocked at the door.

"Who is there?" demanded Rudolph.

"I want to speak to Madam Mathieu," answered a hoarse and husky voice, with an accent which denoted the speaker to be one of the lowest order. Madam Mathieu was a diamond broker living in this house, who employed Morel.

This voice, singularly accented, awakened some vague recollections in the mind of Rudolph. Wishing to enlighten them, he went and opened the door. He found himself face to face with a fellow whom he recognised at once, so fully and plainly was the stamp of crime marked on his youthful and besotted face.

Either this wretch had forgotten the fea-

tures of Rudolph, whom he had seen only once, or the change of dress prevented him from recognising him, for he manifested no astonishment at his appearance.

"What do you want?" said Rudolph.

"Here is a letter for Madam Mathieu. I must give it into her own hands," answered the man.

"She does not live here: inquire opposite," said Rudolph.

"Thank you, friend; they told me it was the door to the left; I am mistaken."

Rudolph did not know the name of the diamond broker; he had therefore no motive to interest himself about the woman to whom the rogue came as a messenger. Nevertheless, although he was ignorant of the crimes of this bandit, his face had such a guilty look of perversity, that he remained on the threshold of the door, curious to see the person to whom he brought this letter. Hardly had the man knocked at the opposite door when it was opened, and the broker, a large woman of about fifty years of age, appeared, holding a candle in her hand.

"Madam Mathieu?" said the messenger.

"That's my name."

"Here is a letter; I want an answer." He made a step in advance, as if to enter the room; but she made a motion for him not to advance, unsealed the letter, read it, and answered with a satisfied air:

"You will say it is all right, my lad; I will bring what they wish; I will go to-morrow at the same time as before. Give my compliments to this lady."

"Yes, ma'am. Don't forget the messenger."

"Go ask those who sent you; they are richer than I am;" and she closed the door.

Rudolph re-entered Germain's room, seeing the messenger rapidly descending the staircase.

The latter met on the boulevard a man of a villanous and ferocious appearance, who waited for him before a shop. Although several persons might have heard him, but not understood him, it is true, he appeared so much pleased that he could not help saying to his companion, "Come, toss off your tipple, Nick! the old girl's toddled into the trap; she'll meet Screech-Owl; Mother Martial will give us a lift in squeezing the sparklers out of her, and then we will carry the cold meat away in your boat." "Look sharp, then; I must be at Asnières early; I am afraid my brother Martial will suspect something." And the rogues, after having held this conversation, quite unintelligible to those who might have heard it, directed their steps towards the Rue Saint Dénis.

A few moment's after, Rigolette and Rudolph left the abode of Germain, got into the carriage, and drove to the Rue du Temple. When the carriage stopped, and the portress came to open the door, Rudolph saw by the street light a friend of his, who was waiting for him at the passage door.

That presence announced some great event, or, at least, something unexpected, for he alone knew where to find the prince.

"What is the matter, Murphy?" said Rudolph, quickly, while Rigolette collected the papers in the vehicle.

"A great misfortune, your highness!"

"Speak, for Heaven's sake!"

"The Marquis d'Harville"—

"You alarm me!"

"He gave a breakfast this morning to several of his friends. Everything was going off well; he, above all, had never been more gay, when a fatal imprudence"—

"Go on, go on!"

"In playing with a pistol which he did not know was loaded"—

"He has wounded himself?"

"Worse!"

"Well?"

"Something very terrible!"

"What do you say?"

"He is dead!"

"D'Harville! oh, this is frightful!" cried Rudolph, in such a heartrending tone, that Rigolette, who had just descended from the carriage with her bundles, said:

"What is the matter, M. Rudolph?"

"Some very bad news that I have just told my friend, mademoiselle," said Murphy to the girl, for the prince was so much affected that he could not answer.

"It is some really great misfortune?" asked Rigolette, tremblingly.

"A very great misfortune," answered the other.

"Oh! this is frightful!" said Rudolph, after a silence of some moments; then, recollecting Rigolette, he said to her: "Pardon me, my child, if I do not go with you to your room; to-morrow I will send you my address and a permit to go to Germain's prison. I will soon see you again."

"Oh! M. Rudolph I assure you I am very sorry for the bad news you have heard. I thank you for having accompanied me to-night. Good-bye."

The prince and Murphy got into the coach, which took them to the Rue Plumet.

Immediately Rudolph wrote to Clemence the following note:

"MADAM,—I learn this moment the unexpected blow which has overwhelmed you, and takes from me one of my best friends: I shall not endeavour to describe my sorrow.

"Yet I must inform you of things foreign to this cruel event. I have just learned that your stepmother, who has been for some days in Paris, without doubt, leaves to-night for Normandy, taking with her Polidori *alias* Bradamanté. This will tell you of the dangers your father is threatened with, and allow me to give you some advice. After the frightful affair of this morning, your desire to leave Paris will be nothing extraordinary. So set off at once for Aubiers, to arrive there, if not before, at least as soon as your

stepmother. Be assured, madam, far or near, I shall still watch over you; the abominable projects of your stepmother shall be baffled.

"Adieu, madam: I write this in haste. My heart is almost broken when I think of last evening; when I left him, more tranquil, more happy than he had been for a long time.

"Believe, madam, in my profound and sincere devotion.

"RUDOLPH."

Following this advice, Madame d'Harville, three hours after the receipt of this letter, was on the road to Normandy. A post-chaise, which left Rudolph's, followed the same route.

Unfortunately, from the trouble into which she was plunged by this complication of events, and the precipitation of her departure, Clemence forgot to acquaint the prince that she had met Fleur de Marie at Saint Lazare.

It will be remembered, perhaps, that the evening previous, La Chouette had threatened Mrs. Seraphin to disclose the fact of the existence of La Goualeuse, affirming that she knew (and she told the truth) where the young girl then was. It will also be remembered that after this conversation, Jacques Ferrand, fearing the revelation of his criminal misdeeds, had determined that it was for his interest to put the Goualeuse out of the way, whose existence, once known, might compromise him dangerously. He had, therefore, caused to be written to Bradamanté a note, to summon him to come and hatch some new schemes, of which Fleur de Marie was to be the victim.

Bradamanté, occupied with the interests, not less pressing, of the stepmother of Madam d'Harville, who had her own reasons for conducting the quack to the bedside of M. d'Orbigny, doubtless finding it more to his advantage to serve his old friend, paid no attention to the invitation of the notary, and set out for Normandy without seeing Mrs. Seraphin.

The storm gathered around Jacques Ferrand; in the course of the day, La Chouette had returned to reiterate her threats, and, to prove that they were not in vain, she had declared to the notary that the little girl, formerly abandoned by Mrs. Seraphin, was then a prisoner at Saint Lazare, under the name of La Goualeuse, and that if they did not give her ten thousand francs in three days, this girl should receive some papers which would inform her that she had been in her infancy confided to the care of Jacques Ferrand.

According to his custom, the notary denied all this with audacity, and drove off La Chouette as an impudent liar, although he was convinced and frightened by her threats.

In the course of the day the notary found means to assure himself that the Goualeuse was a prisoner at Saint Lazare, and so noted for her good conduct, that her release was expected soon.

Furnished with this information, Jacques Ferrand, having arranged a most diabolical scheme, felt that, to execute it, the assistance of Bradamanté was more and more indispensable; hence the frequent attempts of Mrs. Seraphin to see the quack. Learning the same evening of his departure, forced to act by the imminence of his fears and danger, he remembered the Martial family—those river pirates established near Asnières Bridge, to whom Bradamanté had proposed to send Louise Morel, in order to get rid of her with impunity.

Having absolutely need of an accomplice to carry out his wicked designs against Fleur de Marie, the notary took every precaution in the case a new crime should be committed, and the next morning, after the departure of Bradamanté for Normandy, Mrs. Seraphin went in great haste to see the Martials.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE RIVER PIRATES' HAUNT.

THE following scenes took place on the evening of the day that Mrs. Seraphin had, according to the notary's orders, paid a visit to the Martials, established on the point of a small island, not far from Asnières Bridge. Martial, the father, who had died on the scaffold like his own father, left a widow, four sons, and two daughters. The second of these sons was already condemned to the galleys for life. Of this numerous family, there remained on the island the mother: three sons; the eldest (the lover of La Louve) twenty-five, the other twenty, the youngest twelve: two daughters; one eighteen, the second nine. Instances of such families, wherein is perpetuated a kind of frightful inheritance in crime, are but too frequent. This must be so, because society thinks only of punishing, never of preventing the evil.

The gloomy picture which follows, of the river pirates, has for its object to show what, in a family, inheritance of evil may be, when society either legally or kindly does not interfere to preserve the unfortunate, orphaned by the law, from the terrible consequences of the judgment visited on their father.

The head of the Martial family, who first settled on this little island, was a dredger (*ravageur*).

They, as well as the *débardeurs* and the *déchireurs* of boats, remain almost the entire day plunged in the water to their waists, to follow their trade.

The *débardeurs* bring to land floating wood.

The *déchireurs* knock to pieces the rafts which bring down the wood. Quite as aquatic as the preceding operatives, the labour of

ravageurs has a very different object. Advancing in the water, as far as they can, they are enabled, by means of long rakes, to drag the mud and sand from the bed of the river; then, collecting this in large wooden bowls, they wash it, and thus collect a large quantity of pieces of metal of all kinds, iron, copper, lead and brass.

Often they find in the sand fragments of gold or silver jewels, carried into the Seine either by the gutters or from the masses of snow and ice collected in the streets in winter, and thrown into the river. We do not know by virtue of what tradition or by what usage these industrious people, generally honest, peaceable, and laborious, are so formidably named.

Old Martial, first inhabitant of the island, being a ravageur (a sorry exception), the people living on the banks of the river called it the Ravageur's island.

The dwelling of the river pirates is situated at the south end of the isle. On a sign which hangs near the door can be seen:

"The Dredgers' Arms.
Good Wines, Fish fried and boiled.
Boats to Let."

It will be seen, that to his other business the head of this family had added an innkeeper's, fisherman's, and the keeping of boats for hire. The widow of this executed criminal continued to keep the house. Vagabonds, wandering quacks, and itinerant keepers of animals came to pass Sundays and other non-working days in parties of pleasure.

Martial (the lover of La Louve), the eldest son of the family, least vicious of all, fished by stealth, and, for pay, took the part of the week against the strong.

One of his brothers, Nicholas, the future accomplice of Barbillon in the murder of the diamond broker, was apparently a ravageur, but, in fact, a pirate along the Seine and its banks. Finally, François, the youngest son, took care of those who wished to go boating.

We will just mention Ambrose Martial, imprisoned for life for robbery and attempt at murder. The eldest girl nicknamed Calabash, assisted her mother in the kitchen and to wait upon the guests; her sister Amandine, aged nine years, gave what aid she could to them.

On this night, thick, heavy clouds, driven by the winds, obscured the sky; hardly one star could be seen through the increasing gloom. The house with its irregular gables, was completely buried in darkness, except the two windows of the ground-floor, from which streamed a red light, reflected like long trains of fire on the troubled waters near the landing-place, close to the house. The chains of the boats moored there mingled their rattlings with the mournful sighings of the wind through the poplars, and the heavy splashing of the water on the shore. Part of the family was assembled in the kitchen, a large, low room; opposite the door were two windows, between which was a large dresser; on the left, a high fireplace; to the right, a staircase which led to the upper story; at the side of this, the entrance to a large room, furnished with several tables, destined for the guests. The light of a lamp, joined to the flames of the hearth, shone on a number of saucepans, and other cooking utensils of copper, hung on the walls, or arranged on shelves with crockery; a large table stood in the centre of the kitchen. The widow was seated by the fire with her three children. Tall and thin, she appeared to be about forty-five years of age. She was dressed in black; a mourning kerchief, tied round her head with two loose ear-like ends, concealed her hair, and almost covered her pale, wrinkled forehead; her nose was long, straight, and pointed; her cheek bones prominent, and cheeks fallen in; her yellow, sickly-looking skin was deeply marked with the small-pox; the corners of her mouth, always drawn down, rendered still harsher the expression of her cold, stern, sinister-looking face, immovable as a mask of marble. Her dull, blue eyes were surmounted by gray brows. She and her two daughters were occupied with some sewing.

The eldest resembled her mother—the same cold, calm, wicked look; her thin nose, mouth, and pale look. Only her earthy skin, yellow as saffron, gave her the nickname of Calabash. She wore no mourning: her dress was brown; her black lace cap displayed two bands of uncommonly light flaxen hair, with no lustre. François, the youngest son, was seated on a bench mending a small mesh, a very destructive sort of fishing net, strictly forbidden use on the Seine. Notwithstanding his sunburnt appearance, his skin was fair; red hair covered his head; his features were well turned, his lips thick, his forehead projecting, his eyes sharp and piercing: there was no resemblance to his mother or eldest sister. His expression was timid yet cunning; from time to time, through the kind of mane which fell over his face, he cast obliquely on his mother a look of defiance, or exchanged with his sister Amandine a glance of intelligence and affection.

She, seated by his side, was occupied, not in marking, but in unmarking some linen stolen the night previous. She was nine years old, and resembled her brother as much as her sister did her mother; her features, without being any more regular, were less coarse than François'; although covered with freckles, her skin was of dazzling purity; her lips were thick, but vermillion; her hair red, but fine, silky, and brilliant; her eyes small, but soft and expressive.

When they exchanged looks, Amandine pointed to the door; at this sign François answered by a sigh; then, calling the attention of his sister by a rapid gesture, he counted distinctly from the end of his netting needle ten threads of the net. This meant, in their own symbolical language,

that their brother Martial would not return before ten o'clock.

On seeing these two quiet, wicked-looking women, and these two poor, restless, mute, trembling little children, one could easily guess they were two tormentors and two victims.

Calabash, noticing that Amandine had ceased a moment from work, said to her, in a harsh voice, "Will you soon have done with that chemise?"

The child held down her head without replying; with fingers and scissors, she quickly finished picking out the marks made with red cotton, and then, handing the work to her mother, said timidly, "Mamma, I have finished it."

Without making any reply, the widow threw her another piece of linen. The child could not catch it in time, and let it fall. Her sister gave her, with her iron hand, a heavy slap on the arm, saying, "Little stupid fool!"

Amandine resumed her work after having exchanged a hasty glance with her brother: a tear glistened in her eye. The same silence continued to reign in the kitchen. The wind howled without, and the sign creaked mournfully on its hinges. The only sounds within were the bubbling of a saucepan placed before the fire. The two children observed with secret alarm that their mother did not speak. Although she was habitually very quiet, this complete taciturnity and certain contractions of her lips announced that the widow was in that which they called her white rage, that is to say, a prey to some concentrated irritation.

The fire appeared to be going out from want of fuel.

"François, a stick of wood!" said Calabash.

The young net-mender looked behind the chimneypiece, and answered, "There is no more there."

"Go to the wood-pile," said Calabash.

François murmured some unintelligible words, but did not stir.

"François, did you hear me?" said Calabash sharply.

The widow placed on her knees a napkin, which she also was unmarking, and looked at her son.

He had his head down, but he thought he felt the terrible look of his mother was upon him. Fearing to meet her formidable face, the child remained immovable.

"Are you deaf, François?" resumed Calabash, much irritated. "Mother—do you see."

Amandine, without being perceived, nudged her brother to urge him tacitly to obey Calabash. François did not stir. The eldest sister looked at her mother, as if to demand the punishment of the offender. The widow understood her, and pointed with her long, bony finger to a long willow switch, which stood in the corner.

Calabash leaned back, took this instrument of correction, and handed it to her mother.

François had perfectly understood the gesture of his mother; he jumped up quickly, and with one bound was out of his mother's reach.

"You want mother to beat you soundly?" cried Calabash, "do you?"

The widow, holding the rod in her hand, bit her lips, and looked at François with a steady eye, without pronouncing a word. From the slight agitation of Amandine's hands, who sat with her head down, while her neck was suffused with red, it could be seen that the child, although accustomed to such scenes, was alarmed at the fate which awaited her brother, who, having taken refuge in a corner of the kitchen, seemed alarmed and yet rebellious.

"Take care of yourself; mother will get up, and then it will be too late," said Calabash.

"All the same to me," answered François, turning pale. "I prefer to be beaten as I was yesterday to going to the wood-pile at night."

"And why?" said Calabash, impatiently.

"I am afraid of the wood-pile!" answered François, shuddering in spite of himself.

"You are afraid, fool! of what?"

François hung his head without answering.

"Will you speak? What are you afraid of?"

"I don't know; but I'm afraid."

"You have been there a hundred times, and even last night."

"I don't want to go there any more."

"There's mother; she's getting up."

"So much the worse for me," cried the child. "Let her beat me; let her kill me; but I will not go to the wood-pile—at night, above all."

"But, once more I ask you, why not?" said Calabash.

"Well, because there's some one"—

"Some one?"

"Buried there," murmured the trembling boy.

The widow, notwithstanding her impassibility, could not repress a slight shudder; her daughter imitated her; one would have said that the two had received an electric shock.

"Some one buried in the woodhouse?" said Calabash, shrugging her shoulders.

"Yes," said François, in a voice so low that he could hardly be heard.

"Liar!" cried Calabash.

"I tell you that not long ago, while piling the wood, I saw, in a dark corner of the woodhouse, a dead man's bone; it stuck out of the ground, which was damp round about," replied François.

"Do you hear him, mother? Is he not a fool?" said Calabash, making a significant sign to the widow. "They are some mutton bones I threw there."

"It was not a mutton bone," answered the child; "it was bones buried—dead man's bones; a foot which stuck out of the ground. I saw it."

"And you instantly told this to your brother, your good friend Martial—did you not?" said Calabash.

François did not answer.

"Wicked little spy!" cried Calabash, furiously. "Because he is as cowardly as a cow, he will get us guillotined, as father was."

"Since you call me a spy," cried François, exasperated, "I shall tell everything to Martial. I have not told him yet, for I have not seen him since; but when he returns to-night, I"—

The child dared not finish, for his mother advanced toward him, calm but inexorable. Although she habitually held herself much bent over, her size was very large for a woman. Holding the switch in one hand, with the other the widow took her son by the arm, and, in spite of the alarm, resistance, prayers, and tears of the child, dragging him after her, she compelled him to mount the stairs. In a moment was heard the sound of heavy blows, mingled with cries and sobs. When this noise ceased, a door was shut violently, and the widow descended. She placed the whip in its place, seated herself alongside of the fire, and resumed her work without saying a word.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PIRATES.

AFTER a few moments' silence, the widow said to her daughter, "Go and get some wood; we will arrange the woodhouse to-night, on the return of Nicholas and Martial."

"Martial! Will you also tell him that?"

"Some wood," repeated the widow, interrupting her daughter.

She, accustomed to this iron will, lighted a lantern and went out. At the moment she opened the door, it could be seen that the night was very dark, and one could hear the whistling of the wind through the poplars, the clanging of the chains which held the boats, and the wash of the river. These noises were profoundly sad.

During the preceding scene, Amandine, painfully affected at the fate of François, whom she loved tenderly, had dared neither to raise her eyes nor wipe her tears, which fell drop by drop, obscuring her sight. In her haste to finish the work which was given her, she had wounded her hand with the scissors; the blood flowed freely, but the poor child thought less of the pain than the punishment which she might expect for having stained the linen with her blood. Happily, the widow, absorbed in profound thought, perceived nothing. Calabash returned, bringing a basket filled with wood. At a look from her mother, she answered by a nod, intended to say that the dead man's foot did appear above the earth.

The widow bit her lip and continued to work, but she appeared to handle the needle more quickly. Calabash replenished the fire, and resumed her seat alongside of her mother.

"Nicholas does not come," said she. "I hope the old woman who was here this morning, in giving him a rendezvous with Bradamanté, has not got him into some bad scrape. She had such a queer air; she would not explain, or tell her name, or where she came from."

The widow shrugged her shoulders.

"You think there is no danger for Nicholas, mother? After all, perhaps you are right. The old woman said he must be on the Quai de Billy at seven in the evening, opposite the dock, where he would find a man who wished to speak to him, and who would say 'Bradamanté' for password. Really, that does not seem so very dangerous. If Nicholas is late, it is, perhaps, because he has found something on the way, as he did yesterday; this linen, boned from a washing-boat;" and she showed one of the pieces of linen which Amandine was unmarking: then speaking to the child she said, "What does boning mean?"

"That means to take," answered the child, without raising her eyes.

"It means to steal, little fool; do you hear, to steal?"

"Yes, sister."

"And when one knows how to bone like Nicholas, there is always something to gain. The linen he picked up yesterday has only cost us the trouble of picking out the marks—eh, mother?" said Calabash, with a burst of laughter which displayed her decayed teeth, as yellow as her skin.

The widow did not laugh.

"*Apropos* of getting things gratis," continued Calabash, "we can, perhaps, furnish ourselves from another shop. You know that an old man, two or three days since, came to live in the country-house of M. Griffon, the physician of the Paris Hospital—the lonely house a few steps from the river, opposite the plaster quarry?"

The widow bowed her head.

"Nicholas said yesterday that now there was, perhaps, a good job to be done there. And I know, since this morning, that there is some booty there for certain. I must send Amandine to wander around the house! they will pay no attention to her; she will pretend to be playing, will look well about her, and then come and let us know what she has seen. Do you hear what I say?"

"Yes, sister, I will go," answered the trembling child.

"You always say 'I will,' but you never do it, you sly puss. The time I told you to take

the five francs from the counter of the grocer at Asnières, while I kept him busy at the other end of his shop—it was very easy; no one suspects a child—why didn't you obey?"

"Sister, my heart failed me; I did not dare."

"The other day you dared to steal a handkerchief from the pedlar's pack while he was selling at the tavern. Did he find it out, fool?"

"Sister, you forced me—it was for you; and, besides, it was not money."

"What of that?"

"To take a handkerchief is not so bad as to take money."

"On my word! Martial teaches you these whims, doesn't he?" said Calabash, in an ironical manner. "You'll go and tell him everything, little spy! Do you think we are afraid that he'll eat us?" Then, addressing the widow, Calabash added, "Mother, this will end badly for him; he wants to lay down the law here. Nicholas is furious against him; so am I. He sets Amandine and François against us, against you. Can it be borne?"

"No!" said the mother, in a short, harsh voice.

"It is especially since his Louise was Saint Lazared that he has gone on like a madman. Is it our fault that she is in prison? When she is once out, let her come here, and I will serve her out—good measure—though she is strong."

The widow, after a moment's pause, said to her daughter, "You think there is something to be done with the old man who lives in the doctor's house?"

"Yes, mother."

"He looks like a beggar."

"That doesn't prevent his being a noble."

"A noble?"

"Yes; or that he should have gold in his purse, although he goes to Paris on foot every day, and returns in the same manner, with his heavy stick for his carriage."

"How do you know that he has gold?"

"The other day I was at the post office, to see if there were any letters from Toulon."

At these words, which brought to her mind her son at the galleys, the widow knit her brows and suppressed a sigh.

Calabash continued: "I awaited my turn, when the old man we speak of came in. I twigged him at once by his beard, as white as his hair, and his black eyebrows. In spite of his age, he must be a determined old man. He said, 'Have you any letters from Angers for the Count of Saint Rémy?' 'Yes,' was the answer, 'here is one.' 'It is for me,' ssid he; 'here is my passport.' While the postmaster examined it, the old man drew out his purse to pay the postage. At one end I saw the gold glittering through the meshes, at least forty or fifty louis,' cried Calabash, her eyes twinkling, 'and yet he is dressed like a beggar. He is one of those old misers who are stuffed with gold. Come, mother, we know his name; it may serve us to get into the crib when Amandine finds out if he has any servants."

A violent barking of the dogs interrupted Calabash. "Oh, the dogs bark," said she; "they hear a boat. It is either Martial or Nicholas."

After a few moments the door opened, and Nicholas Martial made his appearance. His face was ignoble and ferocious; small, thin, pitiful; it could hardly be imagined that he followed so dangerous a calling; but an indomitable energy supplied the place of the physical strength which was wanting. Over his blue slop he wore a great coat, without sleeves, made of goat-skin with long hair. On entering he threw on the ground a roll of copper which he had on his shoulder.

"Good night, and good booty, mother," cried he, in a cracked voice; "there are three more rolls in my boat, a bundle of clothes, and a box filled with I don't know what, for I have not amused myself by opening it. Perhaps I am sold—we shall see."

"And what about the man at the Quai de Billy?" asked Calabash, while the widow looked at her son without saying a word.

He, for sole answer, put his hand in his pocket and jingled together a number of pieces of silver.

"You took all that from him?" cried Calabash.

"No, he shelled out himself two hundred francs, and he will come down with eight hundred more when I shall have—but enough; let us unload the boat; we can jaw afterward. Isn't Martial here?"

"No," said the sister.

"So much the better; we will lock up the booty without him; just as well he shouldn't know."

"You are afraid of him, coward!" said Calabash, crossly.

"Afraid of him? me!" He shrugged his shoulders. "I am afraid he'll sell us, that's all. As to the fear, my sticker has too sharp a tongue."

"Oh, when he is not here, you brag; let him but come, that shuts your bill."

Nicholas appeared insensible to this reproach, and said, "Come, quick! quick! to the boat. Where is François, mother? He could help us."

"Mother has shut him up-stairs, after having dressed him nicely; he goes to bed without supper," said Calabash.

"Good; but let him come and help us unload the boat all the same—eh, mother? Calabash, him, and me, in a twist, will have all housed."

The widow pointed upwards. Calabash understood, and went to look for François.

The gloomy visage of Mother Martial had become slightly relaxed since the arrival of Nicholas; she liked him better than Calabash, but not as well as she did her Toulon

son, as she called him; for the maternal love of this ferocious creature increased in proportion to the criminality of her offspring. This perverse preference sufficiently explains the dislike of the widow to her youngest children, who displayed no bad tendencies, and her profound hatred for Martial, her eldest son, who, without leading a blameless life, might have passed for a very honest man if he had been compared to Nicholas, Calabash, or his brother, the galley-slave at Toulon.

"Where have you been plundering to-night?" asked the widow.

"On returning from the Quai de Billy, I cast a sheep's eye upon a barge fastened to the quay near the Invalides Bridge. It was dark; I said, no light in the cabin—the sailors are on shore—I'll go on board; if I meet anyone, I'll ask for a piece of seizing to mend my oar. I went into the cabin—nobody; then I took what I could, some clothes, a large box, and, on the deck, four rolls of copper; for I returned twice. The barge was loaded with copper and iron. But here come François and Calabash. Quick, to the boat! Come, be moving you, too, Amandine. You can carry the clothes. A dog learns to carry before he is taught hunting."

Left alone, the widow busied herself in preparing the supper for the family, placing on the table glasses, bottles, plates, and silver forks and spoons. Just as she finished her preparation, her children returned heavily laden. The weight of the two rolls, which he carried on his shoulders, seemed almost to crush François. Amandine was hardly visible under the bundle of clothes which she carried on her head. Nicholas and Calabash carried between them a deal box, on the top of which was placed the fourth roll of copper.

"The box, the box!" cried Calabash with impatience. "Let us air the case!"

The copper was thrown on the ground. Nicholas, armed with a hatchet, endeavoured to get it under the cover, so as to force it up. The red, flickering light from the hearth illuminated this scene of pillage; without, the wind howled with renewed violence. Nicholas, kneeling before the box, tried to break it, and uttered the most horrible oaths on seeing his efforts useless. Her eyes glistening with cupidity, her cheeks flushing, Calabash kneeled on the box, and assisted Nicholas with all her strength. The widow, separated from the group by the table, where she stood at full length, also had her eager gaze fixed on the stolen object.

Finally, a thing, alas! too human, the two children, whose good natural instincts had so often triumphed over the cursed influence of this abominable domestic corruption, forgetting their scruples and their fears, gave way to the attractions of a fatal curiosity. Leaning against one another, their eyes sparkling, their breathing oppressed, François and Amandine were not less anxious to know the contents of the box than their brother or sister. At length the top was forced off.

"Ah!" cried the family, in a joyful tone. And all, from the mother to the little girl, crowded around the stolen case. Without doubt, consigned by some Paris merchant to some of his country customers, it contained a large quantity of articles for women's use.

"Nicholas is not sold!" cried Calabash, unrolling a piece of muslin de laine.

"No," answered the pirate, shaking out a package of foulards; "no, I have paid my expenses."

"Levantine! that will sell like bread," said the widow, putting her hand in the box. "The Bras-Rouge's fence, who lives in the Rue du Temple, will buy the stuffs, and Daddy Micou, who keeps furnished lodgings in the Quartier Saint Honoré, will arrange for the copper."

"Amandine!" whispered François to his little sister; "what a pretty cravat this would make."

"Yes, and it would make a very fine scarf," answered the child, with admiration.

"I must say you had some luck, getting on board the barge," said Calabash; "look here, famous shawls; three real silk! Do look, mother?"

"Burette will give at least five hundred francs for the whole," said the widow, after a close examination.

"Then it must be worth at least fifteen hundred francs," said Nicholas; "but a receiver is as bad as a thief! Bah! I do not know how to cheat. I shall be soft enough this time again to do just as Burette wishes, and Micou also; but he is a friend."

"Never mind; the seller of old iron is a robber just like the rest, but these rascally receivers know one has need of them," said Calabash, trying on one of the shawls, "and they abuse it."

"There's nothing more," said Nicholas, reaching the bottom of the box.

"Now all must be repacked," said the widow.

"I'll keep this shawl," said Calabash.

"You'll keep it!" cried Nicholas, brutally, "if I give it you. You are always taking—you—Miss Free-and-easy."

"Oh! you then refrain from taking?"

"I? I nail at the risk of my skin. It's not you who'd have been jugged if they'd caught me on the barge."

"Well, there's your shawl; I don't care about it," said Calabash, sharply, throwing it back into the case.

"It is not on account of the shawl that I speak; I am not mean enough to value a shawl; for one, more or less, old Burette will not change her price; she buys in a lump," said Nicholas.

"But instead of saying that you'd take the shawl, you might ask if I would give it to you. Come, keep it—keep it, I tell you; or,

if you won't, I'll pitch it into the fire to make the pot boil."

These words soothed Calabash's bad temper, and she took the shawl. Nicholas was, doubtless, in a generous mood; for, tearing off with his teeth two of the handsomest handkerchiefs, he threw them to François and Amandine.

"That's for you, my kids, to put you in the notion to go on the lay. Appetite comes with eating. Now go to bed; I want to talk with mother. Your supper shall be brought up-stairs." The children clapped their hands, and waved triumphantly the stolen handkerchiefs which had just been given them,

"Well, you little blockheads!" said Calabash, "will you listen any more to Martial? Has he ever given you such handsome things?" François and Amandine looked at each other; then hung their heads without replying.

"Speak!" said Calabash, harshly; "has he ever made you presents?"

"Well, no; he never has," said François, looking at his red handkerchief with delight. Amandine said, in a very low tone, "Brother Martial does not make us presents because he hasn't the means,"

"If he would steal, he'd have them," said Nicholas; "eh, François?"

"Yes, brother," answered François. Then he added: "Oh, the beautiful silk! What a fine cravat for Sunday?"

"What a fine head-dress!" said Amandine.

"Not to say how wild the children of the lime-burner will be when they see you pass," said Calabash, looking at the children to see if they comprehended the bearing of the words. The abominable creature thus called vanity to her assistance to stifle the last scruples of conscience. "The beggars will burst with envy; while you, with your fine silk, will look like little g[illegible]try."

"That's true," answered François. "I am much more content with my fine cravat, since the little lime-burners will be so jealous; aint you, Amandine?"

"I am content with my fine kerchief."

"You'll never be anything but a noodle!" said Calabash, disdainfully; and taking from the table a piece of bread and cheese, she gave it to the children and said, "Go up-stairs to bed. Here is a lantern. Take care of the fire, and put out the light before you go to sleep."

"And," added Nicholas, "remember, if you say a word to Martial about the box, or the copper, or the clothes, yon shall have a dance, so that you'll take fire; not to say taking away the silks."

After the departure of the children, Nicholas and his sister hid the stolen articles in a little cellar under the kitchen.

"Mother! some drink, and let it be choice," cried the robber; "I have well earned my day. Serve supper, Calabash; Martial shall gnaw our bones—good enough for him. Now let us talk of the customer, 'Quai Billy,' for to-morrow or next day that must come off, if I wish to pocket the money he promised. I am going to tell you, mother; but some drink—thunder! let's have some drink. I'll stand sam!"

Nicholas rattled the money which he had in his pocket anew; then, throwing off his goatskin jacket and his black woollen cap, he seated himself at table before a ragout of mutton, a piece of cold veal, and salad.

When Calabash had brought some wine and brandy, the widow seated herself at the table, having Nicholas on her right and Calabash on her left; opposite were the unoccupied places of Martial and the two children. The thief drew from his pocket a long, broad knife, with a horn handle and sharp blade. Looking at this murderous weapon with a kind of ferocious satisfaction, he said to the widow, "My rib-tickler still cuts well! Pass me the bread, mother!"

"Speaking of knives," said Calabash, "François saw something in the wood-house."

"What?" said Nicholas, not understanding her.

"He saw one of the trotters"—

"Of the man?" cried Nicholas.

"Yes," said the widow, putting a slice of meat on the plate of her son.

"That's queer, for the hole was very deep," said the brigand; "but since that time should have been heaped up.

"We must throw the lot into the river to-night," said the widow.

"It is more sure," answered Nicholas.

"We can tie a stone to it with a piece of old chain," added Calabash.

"Not so foolish!" said Nicholas, pouring out drink; "come, drink with us, mother; it will make you more lively."

The widow shook her head, drew back her glass, and said to her son, "And the man at the Quai de Billy?"

"Well," said Nicholas, continuing to eat and drink. "On arriving at the wharf, I tied up my boat, and mounted on the wharf; seven o'clock struck at the military bakehouse of Chaillot; I could hardly see my hand before my face. I walked up and down for about fifteen minutes, when I heard some one walk softly behind me. I stopped; a man wrapped in a cloak approached, coughing; he halted. All that I know of his face is, that his cloak hid his nose, and his hat covered his eyes."

(This mysterious personage was Jacques Ferrand, who, wishing to make away with Fleur de Marie, had that morning dispatched Mrs. Seraphin to the Martials, whom he hoped to make his instruments in this new crime).

"'Bradamanté,' said the tax-payer," continued Nicholas; "the pass-word agreed upon with the old woman. 'Ravageur,' I replied. 'Is your name Martial?' said he to me.' 'Rather!' 'A woman came to your island this morning; what said she say?' 'That

you had something to say to me from M. Bradamanté.' 'Do you wish to gain some money?' 'Yes; much.' 'Have you a boat?' 'Four! it is our business; boatmen and ravageurs, from father to son, at your service.' 'I'll tell you what is to be done—if you are not afraid'— 'Afraid—of what?' 'To see some one *drowned by accident;* only it is necessary to assist the *accident.* Do you comprehend?' 'Oh, you want to make some cove drink of the Seine by chance! that suits me; but, as it is rather a delicate draught, the seasoning will cost rather dear.' 'How much for two?' 'For two! will there be two persons to make soup of in the river?' 'Yes.' 'Five hundred francs a-head, and not dear?' 'Agreed for a thousand francs.' 'Pay in advance?' 'Two hundred in advance, the remainder afterward.' 'You are afraid to trust me?' 'No, you can pocket my two hundred francs without fulfilling our agreement.' 'And you, old friend, once the affair finished, when I ask you for the remainder, can answer me—go to the deuce!' 'You must run your chance; does this suit you, yes or no? Two hundred francs down, and the night after to-morrow, here, at nine o'clock, I will give you eight hundred francs.' 'And who shall tell you that I have made these two persons drink?' 'I shall know it; that's my affair! Is it a bargain?' 'It is.' 'Here's your money. Now listen to me; you will know the old woman again who came to see you this morning?' 'Yes.' 'To-morrow, or the day after at farthest, you will see her arrive, about four o'clock in the afternoon, on the shore opposite your island with a young girl; the old woman will make you a signal by waving her handkerchief.' 'Yes.' 'How long does it take to go from the shore to your island?' 'Twenty good minutes.' 'Your boats have flat bottoms;' 'Flat as your hand.' 'You must make a hole in the bottom of one of your boats, so as to be able, by opening it, to make it sink in a twinkling; do you comprehend?' 'Very well; you are the devil! I have an old boat that I was about to break up; it will just answer for this last voyage.' 'You set out, then, from your island with this boat; a good boat follows you, conducted by some one of your family. You land; you take the old woman and the young girl on board your boat, and you set off for the island; but, at a reasonable distance from the shore, you feign to stoop to fix something; you open the hole, and you jump lightly into the other boat, while the old woman and the young girl'— 'Drink out of the same cup—that's it?' 'But are you sure of not being disturbed? should there be any guests at your tavern?' 'No fear; at this time, in winter, above all, no one comes; it is our dead season; and if any one should come, they would not be in the way; on the contrary—all tried friends.' 'Very well! Besides, you will not be at all compromised; the boat will sink through age, and the old woman with it. In fine, to be well assured that both of them are drowned (remember, by accident), you should, if they appear again, or if they cling to the boat, appear to do all in your power to assist them, and'— 'Aid them—to dive again! Good again.' 'It is better that the job take place after sunset, so that it be dark when they fall into the water.' 'No, for if one cannot see clear, how can they know whether the two women have drunk their fill, or want some more?' 'That is true; then the accident must happen before dark.' 'Very good; but does the old woman suspect anything?' 'No. On arriving she will whisper in your ear: "We must drown the girl; a short time before you sink the boat, make me a sign, so that I can escape with you." You must answer in such a manner as to calm any suspicions.' 'So that she thinks to lead the girl to drink?' 'And she will drink with her. It is wisely arranged.' 'Above all, let the old woman suspect nothing.' 'Be easy; she shall swallow it like honey.' 'Well, good luck! If I am pleased, perhaps I shall employ you again.' 'At your service.' Thereupon," said the brigand, ending his story, "I left the man in the cloak, got into my boat, and, passing by the barge, I picked up the booty you have seen."

It will be seen, from this recital, that the notary wished by a double crime, to get rid of Fleur de Marie and of Mrs. Seraphin at the same time, by making the latter fall into the snare she believed only laid for La Goualeuse. The reasons for putting the latter out of the way are known to the reader; and in sacrificing Mrs. Seraphin, he silenced one of his accomplices (Bradamanté was the other), who could at any time ruin him by ruining themselves, it is true; but Jacques Ferrand thought his secrets better guarded by the tomb than by personal interest. The widow and Calabash had attentively listened to Nicholas, who had only interrupted himself to drink to excess. For this reason he began to talk with singular warmth. "That's not all; I have managed another affair with La Chouette and Barbillon, of the Rue aux Fèves. It is a famous plant, knowingly got up, and if we don't fail, there'll be something to fry, I tell you. It is in contemplation to rob a diamond broker, who has sometimes as much as fifty thousand francs' value in her box."

"Fifty thousand francs!" cried mother and daughter, their eyes sparkling with cupidity.

"Yes, that's all! Bras-Rouge is in the game. Yesterday he decoyed the broker by a letter which Barbillon and I took to her on the Boulevard Saint Denis. Bras-Rouge is a famous fellow! No one suspects him. To make her bite, he has already sold her a diamond for four hundred francs. She will not fail to come at dusk, to his tavern in the Champs-Elysées. We will be there concealed. Calabash may come also, to take care of my boat.

If it is necessary to pack up the broker, dead or alive, this will be a nice carriage, and leave no traces behind. There's a plan for you! Rogue of a Bras-Rouge, what a college-bred scamp."

"I am always suspicious of Bras-Rouge," said the widow. "After the affair of the Rue Montmartre, your brother Ambrose was sent to Toulon, and Bras-Rouge was released."

"Because there was no proofs against him, he is so cunning! But betray others—never."

The widow shook her head, as if she had been only half convinced of the probity of Bras-Rouge.

"I prefer," said she, "the affair of the Quai Billy—the women-drowning. But Martial will be in the way, as he always is."

"The devil's thunder will not rid us of him then," cried Nicholas, half drunk, sticking his long knife with fury in the table.

"I told mother that we had had enough of him; that it could not last," said Calabash; "as long as he is here, we can make nothing out of the children."

"I tell you he is capable of denouncing us any day, the sneak," said Nicholas. "Do you see, mother; if you'd have agreed," added he, in a ferocious manner, looking at the widow, "all would have been settled."

"There are other means."

"This is the best."

"At present, no," answered the widow, with a tone so absolute, that Nicholas was quiet, ruled by her influence. She added, "To-morrow morning he leaves the island for ever."

"How?" said Calabash and Nicholas in a breath.

"He will soon come in; seek a quarrel—boldly—as you have never dared to do. Come to blows, if needs be. He is strong, but you will be two, and I will help you. Above all, no knives—no blood; let him be beaten, not wounded."

"And what then?" asked Nicholas.

"We'll have an explanation; we will tell him to leave the island to-morrow, otherwise we'll repeat this again to-morrow night; such continual quarrels will disgust him, I know, we have let him be too quiet."

"But he is stubborn as a mule; he'll remain on account of the children," said Calabash.

"He is dead beat, but an attack will not scare him," added Nicholas.

"Oh, yes," said the widow; "but every day, every day is too much; he will give up."

"And if he will not?"

"Then I have another plan to force him to leave to-night, or to-morrow morning at latest," answered the widow, with a strange smile.

"Truly, mother?"

"Yes; but I would rather frighten him by quarrelling and fighting; if I do not then succeed, I'll try the other way."

"And if the other way don't answer, mother?" said Nicholas.

"There is still another, which always does," replied the widow.

Suddenly the door opened and Martial entered. It blew so hard outside that they had not heard the barking of the dogs announcing the arrival of the gallows widow's first-born.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MOTHER AND SON.

IGNORANT of the evil designs, Martial slowly entered into the kitchen. A few words of La Louve, in her conversation with Fleur de Marie, have already informed us of the singular life of this man. Endowed with good natural instincts, incapable of an action positively bad or wicked, Martial did not conduct himself as he should have done. He fished contrary to law, and his strength and audacity inspired so much terror in the river-keepers, that they shut their eyes on his proceedings.

The lover of La Louve resembled François and Amandine very much; he was of middling stature, but robust and broad-shouldered; his thick, red hair, cut short, laid in points on his open forehead; his thick, heavy beard, his large cheeks, square nose, bold blue eyes, gave to him a singularly resolute expression.

He wore an old tarpaulin glazed hat; and, notwithstanding the cold, had nothing on but a wretched blouse over his well-worn vest and coarse velveteen trousers. He held in his hand an enormous knotty stick, which he placed alongside of him on the table.

A large dog, with crooked legs, came in with Martial; but he remained near the door, not daring to approach the fire, or the people at the table; experience had proved to old Miraut, that he was, as well as his master, not in very good odour with the family.

"Where are the children?" were the first words of Martial, as he took his seat at the table.

"They are where they are," answered Calabash, sharply.

"Where are the children, mother?" repeated Martial, without paying any attention to his sister.

"Gone to bed," answered the widow, dryly.

"Have they supped, mother?"

"What's that to you?" cried Nicholas, brutally, after having swallowed a large glass of wine, to augment his audacity.

Martial, as indifferent to the attacks of Nicholas as he was to Calabash's, said to his mother, "I am sorry the children have already gone to bed, for I like to have them alongside of me when I sup."

"And we, as they trouble us, packed them off," cried Nicholas; "if it don't please you, go and look for them!"

Martial, much surprised, looked fixedly at his brother. Then, as if reflecting on the folly of a quarrel, he shrugged his shoulders, cut a piece of bread with his knife, and helped

himself to a slice of meat. The terrier had drawn nearer to Nicholas, although still at a very respectful distance; the bandit, irritated at the contemptuous indifference of his brother, and hoping to make him lose his patience by striking the dog, gave Miraut a furious kick, which made him howl piteously. Martial became purple, pressed in his contracted hands the knife which he held, and struck violently on the table; but, still containing himself, he called his dog, and said gently, "Here, Miraut." The terrier came and laid down at his master's feet. This moderation defeated the projects of Nicholas, who wished to push his brother to extremities to bring about a rupture. So he added, "I don't like dogs—I won't have your dog here." For answer, Martial poured out a glass of wine, and drank it slowly.

Exchanging a rapid glance with Nicholas, the widow encouraged him by a sign to continue his hostilities, hoping that a violent quarrel would bring about a rupture and a complete separation.

Nicholas went and took the willow switch which stood in the corner, and, approaching the terrier, struck him, crying, "Get out of this, Miraut!" Up to this time, Nicholas had often shown his animosity towards Martial, but never before had he dared to provoke him with so much audacity and perseverance. At the yelp from his dog, Martial rose, opened the door, put the terrier outside, and returned to continue his supper. This incredible patience, little in harmony with the ordinary character of Martial, confounded his aggressors. They looked at each other, very much surprised. He, appearing completely a stranger to what was passing, ate heartily, and kept profound silence.

"Calabash, take away the wine," said the widow to her daughter.

She hastened to obey, when Martial said, "Stop! I have not finished my supper."

"So much the worse!" said the widow, taking away the bottle.

"Ah! as you like," answered he, and pouring out a large glass of water, he drank it, and smacking his lips, cried, "That's famous water!" This imperturbable coolness still more irritated Nicholas, already much excited by his frequent libations; nevertheless, he recoiled before a direct attack, knowing the superior strength of his brother; suddenly he cried—

"You have done well to knock under, with your dog, Martial; it is a good habit to get into; for you must expect to see La Louve kicked out, just as we have kicked out your dog."

"Oh, yes—for if she has the misfortune to come to the island when she comes out of prison," said Calabash, comprehending the intention of Nicholas, "I will box her soundly."

"And I'll give her a ducking in the mud, near the hovel at the other end of the island," added Nicholas; "and if she comes up again, I'll put her under again with a kick—the hussy."

This insult, addressed to La Louve, whom he loved with unqualified passion, triumphed over the pacific resolutions of Martial; he knit his brows, his blood rushed to his face, the veins on his forehead and neck swelled like ropes; yet he still had command over himself to say to Nicholas, in a voice altered by suppressed rage, "Take care—you seek a quarrel, and you will find a new trick that you do not look for."

"A trick—to me?"

"Yes, better than the last."

"How? Nicholas," said Calabash, with well-feigned attachment, "has Martial beat you? I say, mother, do you hear? I am no more astonished that Nicholas is afraid of him."

"He whipped me, because he took me unawares," cried Nicholas, becoming pale with rage.

"You lie! you attacked me slyly, I kicked you, and I took pity on you; but if you undertake to speak again of La Louve—understand well, of my Louve—then I'll have no mercy—you shall carry my marks for a long time."

"And if I wish to speak of La Louve, I?" said Calabash.

"I will give you a couple of boxes just to warm you; and if you go on, I'll go on to warm you."

"And if I speak of her?" said the widow, slowly.

"You?"

"Yes, me!"

"You?" said Martial, making a violent effort to contain himself, "you?"

"You will beat me also, is it not so?"

"No! but if you speak of La Louve, I'll thrash Nicholas; now go on, it is your affair, and his also."

"You," cried the enraged bandit, raising his dangerous knife; "you thrash me?"

"Nicholas, no knife!" cried the widow, endeavouring to seize the arm of her son. But he, drunk with wine and anger, pushed his mother rudely on one side, and rushed at his brother. Martial fell back quickly, seized his heavy knotted stick, and put himself on the defensive.

"Nicholas, no knife!" repeated the widow.

"Let him alone!" cried Calabash, arming herself with a hatchet.

Nicholas, brandishing his formidable knife, watched a favourable moment to throw himself on his brother. "I tell you," cried he, "that I'll crush you and your Louve, both. Now, mother—now, Calabash! let us cool him; this has lasted too long!" And, believing the time favourable for his attack, the brigand rushed toward his brother with his knife raised.

Martial, very expert with a club, retreated quickly, lifted his stick, made a quick turn with it in the air, describing the figure eight,

and let it fall heavily on the arm of Nicholas, who, hurt severely, dropped his knife. "Brigand, you have broken my arm!" cried he, taking hold of his arm with his left hand.

"No, I felt my club rebound," answered Martial, kicking the knife under the table. Then, profiting by the situation of Nicholas, he took him by the collar, pushed him roughly backward towards the door of the little cellar, opened it with one hand, and with the other threw him in and shut the door.

Returning afterward to the two women, he took Calabash by the shoulders, and, in spite of her resistance, her cries, and a blow from the hatchet which wounded him slightly in the hand, he locked her in the lower room of the tavern which was adjoining the kitchen; then, addressing the widow, still stupified at this manœuvre, as skilful as it was unexpected, he said, coldly, "Now, mother, for us two."

"Well! yes; for us two," cried the widow, and her stoical face became animated, her wan complexion became suffused, her eyes sparkled, anger and hatred gave a terrible character to her features. "Yes; now for us two!" said she, in a threatening tone; "I expected this moment—you shall know at last what I have on my heart."

"And I, also, will tell you."

"If you live a hundred years you shall recollect this night."

"I shall remember it! My brother and sister wished to murder me; you did nothing to prevent it. But come, speak: what have you against me?"

"What's my grudge?"

"Yes."

"Since the death of your father, you have done nothing but cowardly acts!"

"I?"

"Yes, coward! Instead of staying with us to sustain us, you fled to Rambouillet, to poach in the woods with the game-pedlar you knew at Bercy."

"If I had remained here, I should now have been at the galleys, like Ambrose, or fit to go, like Nicholas; I did not wish to be a robber like the others. Hence your hatred."

"And what was your trade? You stole game; you stole fish; no danger in that, coward?"

"Fish, as well as game, belong to no one; to-day in one place, to-morrow in another; it is for who can get it. I do not steal; as for being a coward"—

"You fight, for money, men who are weaker than you are!"

"Because they have beaten those who are weaker than they are."

"Trade of a coward! trade of a coward!"

"There are none honest, it is true; it is not for you to tell me of it."

"Why have you not followed these honest callings, instead of lounging here and living at my expense?"

"I give you the first fish I take, and what money I have—it is not much, but it is enough. I cost you nothing. I have tried to be a locksmith, to gain more; but when one from his infancy has idled on the river and in the woods, one can't do anything else; it is done for life. And, besides, I have always preferred to live alone, on the river or in the woods; there no one questions me. Instead of that, in other places, if anyone should ask me of my father, must I not answer—guillotined! of my brother—galley-slave! of my sister—thief!"

"And of your mother, what would you say?"

"I'd say she was dead."

"And you would do well; it is all as—I disown you, coward! Your brother is at the galleys. Your grandfather and father have bravely finished on the scaffold, in defying the priest and the executioner. Instead of avenging them, you tremble!"

"Avenge them?"

"Yes, to show yourself a real Martial, spit on the knife of Jack Ketch and his red cap, and finish like father and mother, brother and sister."

Habituated as Martial was to the ferocious bombast of his mother, he could not refrain from shuddering.

She resumed, with increasing fury, "Oh! coward, still more 'crétur' than coward! You wish to be honest. Honest? is it that you shall not always be despised, as the son of a murderer, brother of a galley-slave; but you, instead of hugging vengeance, you are afraid; instead of biting, you fly; when they cut off your father's head, you left us, coward! And you knew we could not leave the island without being hunted and howled after like mad dogs. Oh! they shall pay for it, they shall pay for it!"

"One man—ten men can't make me afraid! but to be pointed at by everybody as the son and brother of condemned criminals—well, no! I could not stand it. I prefered to go and poach with Pierre, the game-seller."

"Why did you not remain in your woods?"

"I came back on account of my affair with the guard, and, above all, on account of the children; because they were of an age to be ruined by bad example!"

"What is that to you?"

"To me? because I do not wish to see them become like Ambrose, Nicholas, and Calabash."

"Not possible!"

"And alone, with you all, they would not have failed. I made myself an apprentice to try to earn something, to take them with me, and leave the island; but at Paris everyone knew it; it was always, son of the guillotined; brother of the galley-slave. I had continual fights. It tired me."

"And that did not tire you to be honest; that succeeded so well, instead of having the heart to return to us, to do as we do—as the children shall do in spite of you—yes, in spite

of you. You think you will stuff them with your preachings; but we are here. François already belongs to us—nearly—the first occasion, and he shall be of the band."

"I tell you no."

"You will see. I know it. There is vice at the bottom; but you restrain him. Amandine, when she is once fifteen, will go alone. Ah! they have thrown stones at us, they have hunted us like mad dogs! They shall see what our family is—except you, coward; for you alone make us blush!"

"It is a pity."

"And as you may be spoiled here with us, to-morrow you will go from this never to return."

Martial looked at his mother with surprise; after a moment's pause he said, "You tried to get up a quarrel at supper to arrive at this."

"Yes, to show you what you may expect if you will stay here in spite of us—a hell—do you understand?—a hell upon earth! Every day disputes, blows, fights; and we shall not be alone like to-night; we will have friends to help us; you'll not hold on a week."

"You think to frighten me?"

"I tell you what will happen to you."

"No matter. I remain."

"You will remain here?"

"Yes."

"In spite of us?"

"In spite of you, and Calabash, and Nicholas, and all others of the same kidney!"

"Stop; you make me laugh."

"I tell you I'll remain here until I find the means to earn my living elsewhere with the children; alone, I should not be embarrassed. I should return to the woods; but on their account, I want more time to find out what I want. Until then I remain."

"Ah! you remain until you can take away the children?"

"As you say!"

"Take away the children?"

"When I say to them come, they will come, and running too, I answer for it."

The widow shrugged her shoulders, and replied, "Listen to me. I told you just now, if you were to live a thousand years, you would remember this night. I am going to explain to you why; but once more, have you well decided not to go?"

"Yes! yes! a thousand times, yes!"

"Directly you will say no! a thousand times, no! Listen to me well. Do you know what trade your brother follows?"

"I suspect, but I don't want to know."

"You shall know. He steals."

"So much the worse for him."

"And for you."

"For me?"

"He is a burglar, a galley affair; we receive his plunder; if it is discovered, we shall be condemned to the same punishment as receivers, and you also; the family will be carried off, and the children will be turned into the streets, where they will learn the trade of your father and grandfather quite as well as here."

"I arrested as a receiver, as your accomplice! On what proof?"

"No one knows how you live; you are a vagrant on the water—you have the reputation of a bad man—you live with us. Who will you make believe that you are ignorant of our doings?"

"I will prove the contrary."

"We will accuse you as our accomplice."

"Accuse me! why?"

"To reward you for remaining here in spite of us."

"Just now you wish to alarm me in one way; now it is in another: that don't take. I shall prove that I have never stolen. I remain."

"Ah! you remain? Listen, then, once more: do you remember what happened last Christmas night?"

"Christmas night?" said Martial, endeavouring to collect his thoughts.

"Recollect well."

"I do not recollect."

"You do not remember that Bras-Rouge brought here at night a man well dressed, who wished to be concealed?"

"Yes, now I remember; I went upstairs to bed, and I left him at supper with you. He passed the night here; before daylight Nicholas took him to Saint Ouen."

"You are sure Nicholas took him to Saint Ouen."

"You told me so the next morning?"

"Christmas night, you were then here?"

"Yes. Well?"

"On that night that man, who had much money with him, was killed in this house."

"He! Here?"

"And robbed, and buried in the little woodhouse."

"It is not true," cried Martial, becoming pale with alarm, and not willing to believe in this new crime of his kindred. "You wish to alarm me. Once more I say it is not true."

"Ask your pet, François, what he saw in the woodhouse?"

"François, what did he see?"

"One of the feet of the man sticking out of the ground. Take the lantern; go there and satisfy yourself."

"No," said Martial, wiping the cold sweat from his brow. "No, I do not believe you. You tell me that to"—

"To prove to you that, if you live here in spite of us, you run the risk every moment to be arrested as an accomplice in murder and robbery. You were here Christmas night; we will say how you gave us your aid; how can you prove the contrary?"

"Oh!" said Martial, hiding his face in his hands.

"Now will you go?" said the widow, with a sarcastic smile.

Martial was thunderstruck; he did not doubt the truth of what his mother had said;

the roving life he led, his residence with a family so criminal, might cause heavy suspicions to fall upon him, and these might be changed into certainties in the eyes of justice, if his mother, his brother, his sister pointed to him as their accomplice. The widow enjoyed the situation of her son.

"You have the means to escape from this; denounce us!"

"I ought to do it, but I shall not; you know it well!"

"It is for this I have told you all. Now will you go?"

Martial tried to soften his mother: with a mellowed voice he said, "Mother, I do not believe you capable of this murder."

"As you like, but go away."

"I will go on one condition."

"No conditions."

"You will place the children as apprentices far from this, in the provinces."

"They shall remain here."

"Come now, mother; when you have made them like Nicholas, Ambrose, father—what good will it do you?"

"To do some good business with their aid. We are not yet too many. Calabash remains here with me to keep the tavern. Nicholas is alone; once taught, François and Amandine will help him; they threw stones at them also, children as they were: they must revenge themselves."

"Mother, you love Calabash and Nicholas, don't you?"

"What then?"

"They will go to the scaffold like father."

"What then, what then?"

"And does not their fate make you tremble?"

"Their fate shall be mine—neither better nor worse. I steal, they steal; I kill, they kill. Who takes the mother will take the children. We will not be separated. If our heads fall, they shall fall in the same basket, where they will say adieu! We will not turn back; you are the only coward in the family; we drive you away. Get out!"

"But the children—the children?"

"The children will grow up; I tell you, except for you, they would have been already formed. François is almost ready; when you are gone, Amandine shall make up for lost time."

"Mother, I entreat you, consent to send the children away as apprentices far from here."

"How many times must I tell you that they are in apprenticeship here?"

The widow articulated these words in such a stern manner, that Martial lost all hope of softening this heart of bronze.

"Since it is thus," said he, in a resolute and brief tone, "listen to me in your turn, mother: I remain."

"Ah, ah!"

"Not in this house. I should be murdered by Nicholas, or poisoned by Calabash; but, as I have not the means to lodge elsewhere, the children and I will live in the hovel at the other end of the island: the door is strong; I will make it stronger. Once there, well barricaded, with my gun, my dog, and my club, I fear no one. To-morrow morning I will take away the children; they will come with me, sometimes in my boat, sometimes on the mainland. At night they shall sleep near me in the cabin: we will live on my fishing. This shall continue until I find a place for them; and I will find one."

"Ah! is it so?"

"Neither you, nor my brother, nor Calabash can prevent it. If your thefts and your murders are discovered while I am still on the island, so much the worse; I must run my chance! I shall explain that I returned; that I remained on account of the children, to prevent their becoming rogues. They can judge. But may the thunder crush me if I leave this island, and if the children remain one day more in this house! Yes, I defy you—defy you and yours to drive me from the island!"

The widow knew the resolution of Martial; the children loved their eldest brother as much as they feared him; they would follow him then without hesitation when he wished it. As to him, well armed, resolute, always on his guard; in his boat during the day; barricaded during the night in his cabin, he had nothing to fear from any evil designs of his family. The project of Martial could then, on all points, be realised. But the widow had many reasons to prevent the execution.

In the first place, like as honest artisans consider sometimes the number of their children as riches, on account of their services, so the widow counted on Amandine and François to assist her in her crimes. Then, what she had said of her desire to avenge her husband and her son was true. Certain beings, nursed, become aged, hardened in crime, enter into open revolt, into a murderous warfare against society, and believe by new acts of guilt to avenge themselves for the just punishment which has overtaken them and theirs. And then, in fine, the wicked designs of Nicholas against Fleur de Marie, and still later against the diamond broker, might be defeated by the presence of Martial. The widow had hoped to bring about an immediate separation between herself and Martial, either by fomenting the quarrel with Nicholas, or by revealing to him what risk he ran by remaining on the island. As cunning as she was acute, the widow, perceiving that she was mistaken, felt that it was necessary to have recourse to perfidy to entrap her son in a bloody snare. She resumed then, after a long silence, and with affected bitterness: "I see your plan; you do not wish to denounce us yourself—you wish to do it through the children."

"I?"

"They know now that there is a man

buried here; they know that Nicholas has stolen: once in apprenticeship, they will speak; we shall be taken, and we shall all be executed—you as well as we; that's what will happen if I listen to you—if I allow you to place the children elsewhere. And yet you say you don't wish us any harm! I do not ask you to love me; but do not hasten the moment when we shall be taken."

The softened tones of the widow made Martial believe that his threats had produced a salutary effect: he fell into a frightful snare.

"I know the children," replied he. "I am sure, if I tell them to say nothing, they will be quiet, besides, I shall always be with them, and will answer for their silence."

"Can anyone answer for the words of a child? at Paris, above all, where people are so curious and talkative? It is as much to keep them silent as to aid us that I wish to keep them here."

"Do they not go to the village and to Paris now? Who prevents them from speaking, if they wish to speak? If they were far away from here, so much the better: what they might say would be of no consequence."

"Far from here! and where is that?" said the widow, looking steadily at her son.

"Let me take them away; no consequence to you."

"How would you live?"

"My old master, the locksmith, is a good man. I will tell him what is necessary, and perhaps he will lend me something on account of the children; with that I'll go and bind them out far away from this. We set out in two days, and you will never hear more of us."

"No; I prefer to have them with me. I shall be more sure of them."

"Then I establish myself to-morrow at the hovel, waiting for something better. I have a head also, and you know it."

"Yes, I know it. Oh, how I wish to see you far away from this! Why did you not stay in your woods?"

"I offer to rid you both of myself and the children."

"You would leave La Louve, then—she whom you love so well?"

"That's my business: I know what I have to do; I have a plan."

"If I let you take them away, will you never return to Paris?"

"In three days we will be off, and like the dead for you."

"I prefer to have it so, rather than you should always be here, and be suspicious of them. Come, since it must be so, take them away, and clear out as soon as possible, that I may never see you again."

"Is this settled?"

"It is. Give me the key of the cellar, so that I can release Ni holas."

"No; he can sleep off his wine there."

"And Calabash?"

"It is different. You can open the door after I have gone to bed; it makes me feel bad to see her."

"Go; and may the devil confound you!"

"Is it your good night, mother?"

"Yes."

"Happily, it will be the last," said Martial.

"The last," replied the widow.

Her son lighted a candle, and, opening the kitchen door, whistled to his dog, which came bounding in, and followed his master to the upper story of the mansion.

"Go! your account is finished," muttered the mother, shaking her fist at her son, who had just gone up stairs: "you have brought it upon yourself." Then, assisted by Calabash, who went to look for a bunch of false keys, the widow picked the lock of the cellar where Nicholas was confined, and set him at liberty.

CHAPTER XXV.

FRANÇOIS AND AMANDINE.

FRANÇOIS and Amandine slept in a room situated immediately over the kitchen, at the extremity of a corridor, into which opened several other rooms, serving as private dining-rooms to the frequenters of the tavern. After having partaken of their frugal supper, instead of extinguishing their lantern, according to the orders of the widow, the two children had watched, leaving their door open, to see Martial when he should come to his room. Placed on a rickety stool, the lantern shed a sickly light through the miserable room. Walls of plaster, a cot for François, a child's bedstead, very old and much too short for Amandine, a heap of broken chairs and benches, the result of some of the drunken brawls and turbulent conduct which had taken place at the tavern; such was the interior of this den.

Amandine, seated on the edge of the cot, tried to dress her head with the stolen gift of her brother Nicholas. François, kneeling, presented a fragment of looking-glass to his sister, who, with her head half-turned round, was occupied in tying the ends of the silk into a large rosette. Very attentive, and very much struck with this coiffure, François neglected for a moment to hold the glass in such a position that his sister could see. "Raise the glass higher, now—I cannot see; there—so—good. Wait a little; now I have finished. Look! how do you think it looks?"

"Oh, very well—very well! What a fine tie! You'll make one just like it with my cravat, won't you?"

"Yes, directly; but let me walk a little. You go before—backward; hold the glass up, so that I can see myself as I walk." François executed this difficult manœuvre very well, to the great satisfaction of Amandine, who strutted up and down triumphantly, under the rosette and ears of her *foulard*.

Very innocent under any other circumstances, this conduct became culpable, as François and Amandine both knew the prize was stolen: another proof of the frightful facility with which children, even well endowed, are corrupted almost without knowing it, when they are continually plunged in a criminal atmosphere.

And, besides, the sole mentor of these little unfortunates, their brother Martial, was not himself irreproachable, as we have said: incapable of committing a theft or murder, he did not the less lead an irregular and wandering life. They refused to commit certain bad actions, not from honesty, but to obey Martial, whom they tenderly loved, and to disobey their mother, whom they feared and hated. It is hard to say how much the perceptions of morality with these children were doubtful, vacillating, precarious; with François particularly, arrived at that dangerous period where the mind, hesitating, undecided, between good and evil, perhaps in one moment may be lost or saved.

"How this red becomes you, sister!" said François. "How pretty it is! When we go to play on the shore in front of the plaster-kilns, you must dress yourself so, to make the children wild, who are always throwing stones at us, and calling us little *guillotinés*. I'll put on my fine red cravat, and we will tell them, 'Never mind, you haven't such handsome handkerchiefs as these!'"

"But I say, François," said Amandine, after a pause, "if they knew that these were stolen, they would call us little thieves."

"Who cares if they do?"

"When it is not true, it's all the same; but now"—

"Since Nicholas has given us these, we have not stolen them."

"Yes, but he did; he took them from a boat; and brother Martial says we must not steal."

"But since Nicholas has stolen them, it is none of our business."

"You think so. François?"

"Yes, I do."

"Yet it seems to me that I should have preferred that the person to whom they belonged should have given them to us. Don't you think so, François?"

"Oh, it's all the same to me. They have been given to us, and that's enough."

"You are very sure?"

"Why, yes, yes; do be quiet!"

"Then, so much the better; we have not done what brother Martial forbids, and we have fine handkerchiefs."

"I say, Amandine, if he knew that the other day Calabash made you take that neckerchief from the pedlar's pack, when his back was turned."

"Oh, François, do not speak of that!" said the poor child, whose eyes were filled with tears: "brother Martial would love me no more. He would leave us all alone here."

"Don't be afraid, I will not tell him," he said, laughing.

"Oh, don't laugh at that, François; I am sorry enough; but I had to do it. Sister pinched me till the blood came, and then she looked at me so—so! and yet twice my heart failed me; I thought I could never do it. Finally, the pedlar saw nothing, and sister kept the kerchief. If he had seen me, François, they would have put me in prison."

"They did not see you; it is just the same as if you had not stolen."

"You think so?"

"Of course!"

"And in prison, how unhappy one must be!"

"On the contrary"—

"How, François, on the contrary?"

"Look here! you know the big lame man who lives at Paris with Père Micou; the man who sells for Nicholas; who keeps furnished lodgings, Passage de la Brasserie?"

"A big lame man?"

"Why, yes; who came here at the end of the autumn from Père Micou, with a man with monkeys, and two women."

"Oh, yes, yes; the lame man who spent so much money?"

"I think so; he paid for everybody."

"Do you recollect the excursion on the water?"

"I went with them, and the man with the monkeys took his organ on board to have some music in the boat."

"And then, at night, what fine fireworks they had, François!"

"Yes; and he was no miser; he gave me ten sous! He drank nothing but sealed wine; they had chickens at all their meals; they had at least eighty francs' worth."

"As much as that, François?"

"Oh, yes."

"He was very rich, then?"

"Not at all; what he spent was the money which he earned in prison, from whence he just came."

"He gained all that money in prison?"

"Yes; he said he had seven hundred francs left; that when all was gone, he would do some good job, and if they took him, he didn't care, because he would return to the prison and join his good friends there."

"He wasn't afraid of the prison, then, François?"

"Just the contrary; he told Calabash that they were all jolly together; that he never had a better bed or better food than in prison; good meat four times a week, fire all winter, and a good sum when he came out, while there are so many stupid fools of honest workmen who were starving for want of work."

"Did the lame man say that?"

"I heard him; for I was rowing in the boat while he told this to Calabash and the two women, who said it was the same thing in the prison for women; they had just come out."

"But, then, François, it can't be so wicked to steal, if one is so well off in prison?"

"I don't know; here, there is no one but brother Martial who says it is wrong to steal; perhaps he is mistaken."

"Never mind, we must believe him, François; he loves us so much!"

"He loves us, it is true; when he is here no one dares to beat us. If he had been here to-night, mother wouldn't have whipped me. Old beast! ain't she wicked? Oh! I hate her—hate her. How I wish I was a man, to pay her back all the blows she has given me, and you, who can't bear it as well as I can."

"Oh! François, hush, you make me afraid, to hear you say that you would like to strike mother!" cried the poor little thing, weeping, and throwing her arms around the neck of her brother, whom she embraced tenderly.

"No, it is true," answered François, repulsing his sister gently: "why are mother and Calabash always so severe and cross to us?"

"I do not know," said Amandine, wiping her eyes: "it is, perhaps, because they guillotined father, and sent Ambrose to the galleys."

"Is that our fault?"

"No, but"—

"If I am always to receive blows in the end, I would rather steal, as they wish me to; what good does it do me not to steal?"

"And what would Martial say?"

"Oh! except for him I should have said 'yes' long ago, for I am tired of being flogged; how to-night, mother never was so wicked—she was like a fury—it was very dark, dark; she said not a word, I only felt her cold hand, which held me by the neck, while with the other she beat me, and I thought I saw her eyes glisten."

"Poor François! because you said you saw a dead man's bones in the wood-house?"

"Yes, a foot which stuck out of the earth," said François, shuddering with affright: "I am sure of it."

"Perhaps formerly there was a burying-ground there?"

"Must think so; but then, why did mother say she would whip me again if I spoke of it to Martial? I tell you what, it is likely some one who has been killed in a dispute, and been buried there so it should not be known."

"You are right; for, do you remember, such a thing once liked to have happened?"

"When was that?"

"You know the time that Barbillon struck the man with the knife—the tall man, who is so thin, so thin that he shows himself for money?"

"Ah! yes, the Living Skeleton, as they call him; mother came and separated them, otherwise Barbillon would, perhaps, have killed the great skeleton! did you see how he foamed, and how his eyes stuck out of his head?"

"Oh! he is not afraid to stick a knife into one for nothing."

"He is a mad-cap."

"Oh! yes, so young, and so wicked, François!"

"Tortillard is much younger, and he would be quite as bad, if he had the strength."

"Oh! yes, he is very bad. The other day he struck me because I would not play with him."

"He struck you? good—the next time he comes"—

"No, no, François, it was only in fun."

"You are sure?"

"Yes, very sure."

"Very well—or—but I do not know where he gets so much money from; when he came here with La Chouette, he showed us some gold pieces of twenty francs."

"How impudent he looked when he told us, 'You could have just the same, if you were not little duffers.'"

"Duffers?"

"Yes, that means stupid fools."

"Oh, yes! true."

"Forty francs—in gold—how many fine things I would buy with that! And you, Amandine?"

"Oh! I likewise."

"And what would you buy?"

"Let me see," said the child, in a meditative manner; "in the first place I would get a warm coat for brother Martial, so that he should not be cold in his boat."

"But for yourself—for yourself?"

"I would like an Infant Saviour, in wax, with his lamb and cross, like the image-man had on Sunday, you know, at the door of the Church of Asnières?"

"I hope no one will tell mother and Calabash that they saw us at church."

"True, she has so often forbidden us to enter one. It is a pity, for a church is very nice inside, is it not, François?"

"Yes, what fine candlesticks!"

"And the picture of the Holy Virgin! how good she looks."

"And the lamps! and the fine cloth on the table at the end, where the priest said mass, with his two friends dressed like himself, who gave him water and wine?"

"Say, François, do you recollect last year, the Fête-Dieu, when we saw from here all the little communicants, in their white veils, pass over the bridge?"

"What handsome flowers they had!"

"How they sang, and held the ribands of their banners?"

"And how the silver fringes of the banners glistened in the sun? That must have cost a deal of money!"

"Goodness—how handsome it was, François?"

"I believe you, and the communicants with their badges of white satin on the arm, and wax candles with velvet and gold handles."

"The little boys had banners also, did they not, François?"

"Oh! was I not whipped that day because I asked mother why we did not walk in the procession, like other children?"

"Then it was that she told us never to enter a church, unless it was to steal the money-box for the poor, 'or from the pockets of people listening to mass,' added Calabash, laughing and showing her old, yellow teeth."

"Bad creature—she is!"

"Oh, before I would steal in a church, they should kill me—don't you say so, François?"

"There, or elsewhere, what is the difference when one has decided?"

"I do not know, but I should have more fear; I never could."

"On account of the priests?"

"No; perhaps on account of the picture of the Holy Virgin who looks so good and kind."

"What of that—the picture can't eat you, little fool!"

"True, but I could not. It is not my fault."

"Speaking of priests, Amandine, do you remember the day when Nicholas struck me so hard, because he saw me bow to the curé who was passing on the shore? I had seen him saluted—I did the same; I did not think there was any harm."

"Yes, but that time Martial said just the same as Nicholas, that we had no need to make a salute to a priest."

At this moment, François and Amandine heard some one walk in the corridor.

Martial reached his chamber without any farther trouble, after his conversation with the widow, believing Nicholas locked up until the next morning. Seeing a ray of light issuing from the door of the children's room, he went in. They both ran to him and embraced him tenderly.

"Not yet gone to bed, little chatterers?"

"No, brother—we waited for you to come and say good-night," said Amandine.

"And, besides, some one was talking very loud, downstairs, as if it was a quarrel," added François.

"Yes," said Martial, "I had a dispute with Nicholas, but it is nothing. I am glad to find you up. I have some good news to tell you."

"Us, brother!"

"Would you like to go with me away from here—far away?"

"Oh, yes, brother!"

"Well! in two or three days, all three of us leave the island."

"How glad I am!" cried Amandine, clapping her hands.

"But where shall we go to?" asked François.

"You shall see, inquisitive; but never mind, wherever we go, you shall learn a good trade, which will make you able to earn your living, that is sure."

"Shall I not go any more fishing with you, brother?"

"No, my boy; you shall go as an apprentice to a cabinet-maker or locksmith; you are strong and active; with courage and by working hard, at the end of a year you will be able to earn something; oh, come now, what is the matter—you do not appear to be pleased?"

"Because, brother, I"—

"Well, go on."

"Would rather remain with you, fish, mend your nets, than learn a trade."

"Really?"

"To be shut up in a shop all day, is so gloomy; and to be an apprentice, is so tiresome."

Martial shrugged his shoulders.

"You would rather be idle, a vagabond, a rover?" said he, severely, "before becoming a robber."

"No, brother, but I would rather live here with you, as we live here; that's all."

"Yes, that's it—to eat, drink, sleep, and amuse yourself with fishing, like a lazybones."

"I like that better."

"It is very probable; but you must like something else. Look here, my poor François, it is high time that I take you from this place; without knowing it, you will become as bad as the others. Mother was right—I am afraid you are rather vicious. But you, Amandine, wish to learn a trade?"

"Oh! yes, brother. I would rather learn one than to stay here. I shall be so glad to go away with you and François."

"But what have you got on your head?" said Martial, remarking the triumphant headdress of Amandine.

"A handkerchief which Nicholas gave me."

"He gave me one, also," said François, proudly.

"And where did they come from? It would surprise me if Nicholas should have bought them for you."

The children hung their heads, without replying. After a moment's pause, François said, resolutely, "Nicholas gave them to us; we don't know where they came from; do we, Amandine?"

"No, no, brother!" answered she, stammering and blushing, and not daring to raise her eyes.

"Do not tell a lie!" said Martial, severely.

"We do not lie!" added François, boldly.

"Amandine, my child, tell the truth," said Martial, gently.

"Well! to tell the whole truth," answered Amandine, timidly, "they came from a box of goods which Nicholas brought to-night in his boat."

"Stolen?"

"I think so, brother, from a barge."

"You see, François, you told a lie!" said Martial.

The boy held down his head, without answering.

"Give me the handkerchief, Amandine; give me yours also, François!"

The little girl took off her head-dress, took a last look at the enormous rosette, and gave it to Martial, stifling a sigh of regret. François drew his slowly from his pocket, and, like his sister, returned it to Martial.

"To-morrow morning," said he, "I will give these to Nicholas; you should not have taken them, my children; to profit by a theft is the same as to be the thief."

"Its a pity—they are so handsome!" said François.

"When you have learned a trade, and earn money, you can buy some quite as handsome. Come, go to bed, it is late, children."

"You are not angry, brother?" said Amandine, timidly.

"No, no, my girl, it is not your fault. You live with rogues—you do as they do without knowing it. When you are with honest people, you will do as they do; and you soon shall be there—or deuce take me. Good night."

"Good night, brother!" and, embracing them both, Martial departed.

"What is the matter, François? you look so sad!" said Amandine.

"Brother has taken my handkerchief, and, besides, did you not hear?"

"What!"

"He wants to make us apprentices."

"Are you not glad?"

"Faith, no."

"You would rather remain here and be beaten every day?"

"I am beaten; but I don't have to work. I am all day in the boat, or fishing, or playing, or serving the company, who sometimes give me something for drink, as the lame man did; it is much more amusing than to be shut up from morning to night in a shop, to work like a dog."

"But did you not hear brother say, if we remained here any longer we would become bad?"

"All the same to me, since other children call us already little thieves. Work is too tiresome."

"But here they always beat us! They beat us because we listen more to Martial than to them."

"He is so good to us!"

"He is good, he is good, I do not deny; so I love him well. They do not dare to harm us before him; he takes us out to walk, it is true, but that is all; he never gives us anything."

"Brother, he has nothing; what he earns he gives to our mother for board."

"Nicholas has something; I am sure that if we were to listen to him and mother, he would not treat us so; he would give us fine things, like to-day; he would no longer suspect us; we should have money like Tortillard."

"But we should have to steal, and that would cause brother Martial so much sorrow!"

"Can't help that!"

"Oh, François! besides, if they caught us, we should go to prison."

"In prison, or shut up all day in a shop, is the same thing. Besides, the lame man said they amused themselves so much in prison."

"But the sorrow we would cause to Martial—don't you think of that? It is on our account he came back here, and now remains; alone, he could easily get along: he could return and poach in the woods he likes so well."

"Well! let him take us in the woods with him," said François: "that would be best of all; I would be with him I love so much, and I should not have to work at a trade I cannot bear."

The conversation of François and Amandine was interrupted. Their door was locked on the outside with a double turn.

"We are shut up!" cried François.

"Oh! what for, brother? What are they going to do with us?"

"Perhaps it is Martial."

"Listen, listen, his dog barks!" said Amandine.

"It sounds to me as if they were hammering something," said François: "perhaps they are trying to break open Martial's door!"

"Yes, yes, his dog barks all the time."

"Listen, François! now it sounds like driving nails. Oh, dear, I am afraid. What could brother have done? now hear how his dog howls!"

"Amandine, I hear nothing now," said François, approaching the door.

The two children, holding their breath, listened with anxiety.

"Now they return," said François, in a low tone, "I hear them walking in the corridor."

"Let us jump into bed, mother would kill us if she found us up," said Amandine.

"No!" answered François, still listening: "they have just passed our door; they are running down stairs; now they open the kitchen door."

"You think so?"

"Yes, yes; I know the noise it makes."

"Martial's dog keeps on howling," said Amandine; then, suddenly, she cried, "François, brother calls us."

"Martial!"

"Yes, don't you hear him?" And, notwithstanding the thickness of the two closed doors, the stentorian voice of Martial, calling to the children, could be heard. "We cannot go to him—we are locked up," said Amandine: "they wish to do him some harm, for he calls to us."

"Oh, if I could," cried François, resolutely, "I would prevent them, if they were to cut me to pieces! But brother does not know that we are locked up; he will think that we will not help him."

"Call to him, François, that we are shut up."

He was about to follow the advice of his sister, when a violent blow shook the blind on the outside of the little window of their room.

"They are coming that way to kill us!" cried Amandine, and, in her fright, she threw herself on the bed, and covered her face with her hands.

François remained immovable, although he partook of the alarm of his sister. Yet, after the violent blow of which we have spoken, the blind was not opened; the most profound silence reigned throughout the house.

Martial had ceased to call the children.

Somewhat recovered, and excited by deep curiosity, François ventured to half open the window, and tried to see without through the slats of the blinds.

"Take care, brother," whispered Amandine, who, hearing François open the window, had partly raised herself up. "Do you see anything?"

"No; the night is too dark."

"Do you hear nothing?"

"No; the wind blows too hard."

"Come back, come back, then!"

"Ah! now I see something."

"What?"

"The light of a lantern; it comes and goes."

"Who carries it?"

"I only see the light."

"Oh! now it comes nearer; some one speaks."

"Who is that?"

"Listen, listen! it is Calabash."

"What does she say?"

"She tells them to hold the foot of the ladder steady."

"Oh! do you see, it was in taking away the long ladder which was against our window, that they made such a noise just now."

"I hear nothing more."

"What are they doing with the ladder now?"

"I can't see anything more."

"Do you hear nothing?"

"No."

"Oh, François, it is, perhaps, to get into brother Martial's room by the window, that they have taken the ladder?"

"That may be."

"If you would open the shutter a little to see"—

"I dare not."

"Only a little."

"Oh! no, no. If mother should see it"—

"It is so dark there is no danger."

François, yielding to the entreaties of his sister, opened the blinds and looked out.

"Well, brother?" said Amandine, overcoming her fears, and approaching François on tiptoe.

"By the light of the lantern," said he, "I see Calabash holding the foot of the ladder, placed against Martial's window."

"What then?"

"Nicholas goes up the ladder; he has his hatchet in his hands; I see it shine."

"Hullo, you are not gone to bed! you are spying us!" cried the widow suddenly, calling to François and his sister. Just as she was going into the kitchen, she saw the light from the half-opened window. The unfortunate children had neglected to extinguish their light. "I am coming up," added the widow, in a terrible voice: "I am coming to you, little spies."

Such ate the events which took place at the Ravageurs Island, the evening before Mrs. Séraphin was to conduct thither Fleur de Marie.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FURNISHED ROOMS.

BRASSERIE PASSAGE, a dark and gloomy passage, but little known, although situated in the centre of Paris, extended on one side from the Rue Traversiere Saint Honoré to the Cour Saint Guillaume on the other. About the middle of this wet, muddy, dark, and gloomy street, where the sun scarcely ever penetrates, stood a furnished house.

On a rascally-looking sign was to be seen, "*Furnished Rooms;*" on the right of an obscure alley opened the door of a shop n t less obscure, where the proprietor was generally to be found. This man, whose name has been several times mentioned on Ravageurs Island, was Micou; openly a seller of old iron; but secretly he bought and sold stolen metal, such as iron, lead, copper, and tin. To say that Micou was in business and friendly relations with the Martials, is sufficiently to appreciate his morality.

Micou was a corpulent man of about fifty years of age, with a low, cunning look, a pimply nose, and bloated cheeks; he wore an otter-skin cap, and was wrapped up in an old green garrick. Over the little iron stove near which he was warming himself, a board with numbers painted on it, was nailed against the wall; there were suspended the keys of the rooms whose lodgers were absent. The window looking into the street was soaped in such a manner that those without could not see what was going on within the shop; this window was heavily barred with iron. Throughout this large shop reigned great obscurity: on the damp and blackish walls were suspended rusty chains of all sorts and sizes; the floor was nearly covered with fragments and clippings of iron and lead. Three peculiar knocks at the door attracted the attention of Micou.

"Come in!" cried he; and Nicholas appeared. He was very pale; his face seemed still more sinister-looking than the evening

previous, and yet it will be seen he feigned a kind of noisy gaiety during the following conversation. This scene took place the morning after his quarrel with his brother Martial.

"Oh! here you are, good fellow!" said the lodging-house keeper, cordially.

"Yes, Daddy Micou; I come to have some business with you."

"Shut the door."

"My dog and little cart are there—with the swag."

"What do you bring me? folded tripe (stolen sheet-lead)?"

"No, Micou."

"It is not dredge, you are too cunning now; you are no longer a *ravageur;* perhaps it is iron?"

"No, Micou; it is copper. There must be at least one hundred and fifty pounds; my dog has as much as he can draw."

"Go and bring the stuff; we will weigh it."

"You must help me, Micou; I have a lame arm."

"What is the matter with your arm?"

"Nothing—a bruise."

"You must make some iron red hot, put it into some water, and bathe your arm in this almost boiling water; it is a dealer-in-old-iron's remedy, but it is excellent."

"Thank you, Daddy Micou."

"Come, let us bring in the metal: I will help you, lazy bones!"

The copper was then brought in from a little cart drawn by an enormous dog, and placed in the shop.

"That barrow is a good idea!" said Micou, adjusting the scales.

"Yes; when I have anything to bring, I put my dog and cart into my boat, and I harness him when I land. A jarvey might blab; my dog can't."

"All well at home?" demanded the receiver, weighing the copper: "your mother and sister are in good health?"

"Yes, Micou."

"The children also?"

"The children also."

"And your nephew André, where is he?"

"Don't speak of it! he was in luck yesterday. Barbillon and the big cripple took him away; he only came back this morning; he is already gone on an errand to the post-office, Rue Jean Jacques Rousseau."

"And your brother Martial, is still savage?"

"I do not know anything about him."

"You don't know anything about him?"

"No;" said Nicholas, affecting an indifferent manner; "for two days we have not seen him; perhaps he has returned to his old trade of a poacher—unless his boat, which was very old, has sunk in the river, and he with"—

"That don't give you much concern, good-for-nothing, for you can't feel it much!"

"It is true, one has his own ideas. How many pounds of copper are there?"

"You m..de a good guess—one hundred and forty-eight pounds, my boy."

"And you will owe me"—

"Exactly thirty francs."

"Thirty francs, when copper is a franc a pound? Thirty francs!"

"We will say thirty-five, and don't turn up your nose, or I will send you to the devil—you, copper, dog and cart."

"But, Micou, you cheat me too much! there's no sense in it."

"Prove to me this copper belongs to you, and I will give you fifteen sous a pound for it."

"Always the same song. You are all alike: get out, you nest of thieves! Can one gouge a friend in such style? But this is not all. If I take your merchandise in exchange, you should give me good measure at least!"

"Just so! What do you want? chains or hooks for your boat?"

"No; I want four or five iron plates, very strong, such as would answer to line window-shutters with."

"I have just what you want—the third of an inch thick: a pistol ball could not go through."

"Just the thing!"

"What size?"

"In all, seven or eight feet square."

"Good! what else do you want?"

"Three iron bars, three to four feet long, and two inches square."

"I tore down the other day some grating from a window; that will suit you like a glove. What next?"

"Two strong hinges and a latch; to fix and shut at will, a wicket two feet square."

"A trap, you mean to say?"

"No; a wicket."

"I cannot comprehend what you can want with it?"

"That is possible, but I can."

"Very well, you have only to choose; there are the hinges. What else do you need?"

"That's all."

"It is not much."

"Get my goods ready at once, Daddy Micou, I will take them as I pass; I have some more errands to do."

"With your cart? I say, I saw a bale of goods in the bottom; is it something more that you have taken from everybody's cupboard, little glutton?"

"As you say, Daddy Micou; but you don't eat this; don't make me wait for my iron, for I must be back to the island by twelve o'clock."

"Don't be uneasy, it is eight o'clock; if you are not going far, in an hour you can return; all will be ready. Will you take a drop?"

"To be sure; you can well afford to pay it!"

Daddy Micou took out of an old chest a bottle of brandy, a cracked glass, a cup without a handle, and poured out the liquor.

"Your health, old 'un!"

"Yours, my boy, and the ladies' at home!"

"Thank you; and your lodgings comes on well?"

"So, so. I have always some lodgers for whom I fear the visits of the grabs; but they pay more in consequence."

"Why?"

"How stupid you are! Sometimes I lodge as I buy; to such I no more ask for their passports than I ask you for an invoice."

"Understood! but to those you let as dear as you buy of me cheap."

"Must take care of one's self. I have a cousin who keeps a fine hotel in the Rue Saint Honoré, while his wife is a mantua-maker, who employs as many as twenty assistants, either at her shop, or at their own homes."

"Say now, old obstinacy, there must be some pretty ones there?"

"I guess so! there are two or three that I have seen sometimes bringing in their work. Crimini! aint they nice! One little puss, who works at home, always laughing, called Rigolette. Oh, my lark! what a pity I aint twenty?"

"Come, come, papa, put yourself out, or I'll cry fire!"

"But she is virtuous my boy; she is virtuous."

"Get out! and you say that your cousin"—

"Keeps a very good house, and, as she is of the same number as little Rigolette"—

"Virtuous?"

"Exactly."

"Over!"

"She will not have lodgers without passports or papers; but if any present themselves, knowing I am not very particular, she sends them to me."

"And they pay in consequence?"

"Always."

"But are they all friends of the family, those who have no papers?"

"No. Ah, now, speaking of that, my cousin sent me, a few days ago, a customer. May the devil burn me, if I can understand it! Come, another turn?"

"Agreed; the liquor is good. Your health, Micou!"

"Your's, lad! I say, then, that the other day my cousin sent me a customer whom I cannot make out. Just imagine a mother and her daughter, who had a very seedy look, it is true; they carried their luggage in a handkerchief. Well, although they must, of course, be nobody, since they had no papers, and they lodge by the fortnight; since they have been here they do not stir out; no one comes to see them, my pal—no one! and yet, if they were not so thin and so pale, they'd be two fine women, the little one above all. She is not more than fifteen at least; she is as white as a white rabbit, with large black eyes—large as that! What eyes! what eyes!"

"You'll get on fire again; I'll call the engines! What do these women do for a living?"

"I tell you I comprehend nothing about it; they must be virtuous, and yet no papers; without counting that they receive letters without address, their name must be bad to write."

"How is that?"

"They sent, this morning, my nephew André to the office of the letters to be called for, to reclaim a letter addressed to Madam X. Z. The letter was to come from Normandy, from a place called Aubiers. They wrote that on a piece of paper, so that André might get the letter. You see they can be no great things, women who take the name of X and a Z."

"They will never pay you."

"It is not for an old ape like me to learn to make faces. They have taken a room without a fireplace, for which I make them pay twenty francs a fortnight, and in advance. They are, perhaps, sick; for two days they have not come down. It certainly is not from indigestion; for I do not think they have cooked anything since they have been here."

"If you had only such lodgers as they, Micou"—

"That comes and goes. If I lodge people without passports, I lodge great folks also; I have at this moment two travelling clerks, a post-office carrier, the leader of the orchestra of the Café des Aveugles, and an independent lady, all very genteel people. They save the reputation of the house, if the police wishes to examine too closely; they are not lodgers by night, not they; they are lodgers in the full light of the sun."

"Whenever it shines in your passage, daddy"—

"Joker, one more turn."

"And the last, for I must take my hook. By-the-bye, does Robin, the big lame man, lodge here yet?"

"Upstairs, next door to the mother and daughter. He has consumed all his prison money, and I believe he has none left."

"I say, look out; he's broke his ticket-of-leave."

"I know it well; but I can't get rid of him. I believe he is after something. Little Tortillard, the son of Bras-Rouge, came here the other night with Barbillon, to look for him. I am afraid he will do some harm to my good lodgers, that damnable Robin. As soon as his term is up, I shall put him out, telling him his room is engaged by an ambassador, or by the husband of Madam de Saint Ildefonso!"

"The lady?"

"I should think so! Three rooms and a cabinet on the front, nearly furnished, without counting a garret for her female servant, eighty francs a month, and paid in advance by her uncle, to whom she gives one of her rooms as a stopping-place when he comes from the country. After all, I believe his country house is in the Rue Vivienne, Rue

Saint Honoré, or in the environs of those places."

"Understood! she is an independent lady, because the old one pays her rent."

"Hush! here is her maid."

A woman rather advanced in life, wearing a white apron of doubtful purity, entered the shop.

"What can I do for you, Madam Charles?"

"Daddy Micou, your nephew is not here?"

"He has gone on an errand to the post-office; he will soon return."

"M. Badinot wishes he would take this letter to its address; there is no answer, but it is very urgent."

"In a quarter of an hour it shall be on the way."

"Let him hurry."

"Be easy."

The maid retired.

"That's the servant of one of your lodgers, Micou?"

"Madam Saint Ildefonso's. But M. Badinot is her uncle; he came yesterday from the country," answered Micou. "But see, now, what fine acquaintances they have! I told you they were people of style; he writes to a viscount."

"No!"

"Well, look: 'To his Lordship the Viscount of Saint Remy, Rue de Chaillot. Haste, haste! (*Private.*)' I hope that when one lodges people who have uncles who write to viscounts, one can very well overlook a poor devil in the fourth story, who has no passport!"

"I think so. Well, good-by for the present, Micou; I am going to fasten my dog and cart to your door; I will carry what I have to carry myself. Have my goods and money ready on my return."

"All shall be ready. But, I say, before you go I must tell you, since you have been here, I have watched you."

"Well?"

"I don't know, but you seem to have something the matter with you."

"I?"

"Yes."

"You are a fool. I am hungry."

"Hungry! it is possible, but I should say that you wish to appear lively, but at the bottom there is something that bites and pinches you—conscience, as they say; and to trouble you it must bite hard, for you are no prude."

"I tell you you are crazy, Micou," said Nicholas, shuddering in spite of himself."

"One would say that you tremble."

"My arm pains me."

"Then don't forget my recipe; it will cure you."

"Thank you, Father Micou. Good-bye," said Nicholas, taking his departure.

The receiver, after having concealed the copper, busied himself in collecting the different articles for Nicholas, when a new personage entered the shop. He was a man of about fifty, with a knowing face, heavy gray whiskers, and gold spectacles; he was dressed with some care; the large sleeves of his brown paletot, with velvet cuffs, displayed his straw-coloured gloves; his boots undoubtedly the evening previous had been brilliantly polished.

Such was M. Badinot, the uncle of Madam de Saint Ildefonso, whose social position was the pride and security of Micou the Fence.

Badinot, formerly a lawyer, but struck off the rolls, and now a chevalier d'industrie, and agent of equivocal affairs, served as a spy for the Baron de Graün (Rudolph's friend), and gave the diplomatist a great deal of information concerning several characters of this narration.

"Madam Charles has just given you a letter?" said Badinot to the receiver.

"Yes, sir; my nephew will soon return; in a moment he will be off again."

"No, give me the letter; I have changed my mind; I will go myself to the Viscount de Saint Rémy," said Badinot, emphasising purposely the aristocratic address.

"Here is the letter, sir; have you no other commission?"

"No, friend Micou," said Badinot, with a patronising air; "but I have reproaches to make to you."

"To me, sir?"

"Very grave reproaches."

"How, sir?"

"Certainly Madam de Saint Ildefonso pays very dear for your first floor. My niece is one of those lodgers to whom one should pay the greatest respect; she came with confidence to this house, disliking the noise of the large streets; she hoped she would be here as in the country."

"And she is; just like a village. You ought to find it so, sir, who live in the country—it is just like a real village here."

"A village? Very fine—always the most infernal noise."

"Yet it is impossible to find a more quiet house. Over madam, there is the leader of the orchestra of the Café des Aveugles and a travelling clerk; over them another clerk; over him, again, there is"—

"It is not of these persons I complain; they are very quiet; my niece finds no inconvenience from them; but in the fourth story there is a lame man, whom Madam de Saint Ildefonso met yesterday drunk on the staircase; he uttered horrible, savage cries; she almost fainted, she was so much alarmed. If you think with such occupants your house resembles a village"—

"I swear to you, sir, that I only wait an opportunity to put this lame man out of doors; he has paid me his term in advance, otherwise he would have been already shown how to get out."

"You should not have taken him for a lodger."

"But I hope madam has no other cause of complaint? There is a postman, who is the very cream of honest people! and over him, alongside of the lame man, a woman and her daughter, who keep as close as mice."

"I repeat, Madam de Saint Ildefonso only complains of the lame man; he is the nightmare of the whole house, that knave! and I warn you, if you keep him, he will cause all the respectable people to leave."

"I will send him off, be assured—I do not hold to him."

"And you will do well, for they will not remain."

"Which would not answer my purpose. So, sir, you may regard the lame man as off, for he only has four days to remain here."

"That is too many; however, it is your business. At the very first insult my niece leaves the house."

"Be assured."

"All this is for your interest; profit by it, for I only speak once," said Badinot, in a patronising manner, as he left the shop.

Is it not needless for us to say that this woman and girl who lived so solitary, were victims of the cupidity of the notary? We will conduct the reader into the miserable room they occupied.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE VICTIMS OF AN ABUSE OF TRUST.

LET the reader imagine a closet situated on the fourth story of the house. A pale, gloomy light hardly penetrated this narrow apartment, through a little window of cracked, dirty glass, with a single shutter; a yellowish, dilapidated paper covered the walls; from the broken ceiling hung long spider-webs. The floor, broken in several places, showed the beams and laths of the room below. A deal table, a chair, an old trunk without a lock, and a flock bed with coarse sheets and an old woollen covering—such was the furniture. On the chair was seated the Baroness de Fermont. In the bed reposed Claire de Fermont (such were the names of the two victims of Jacques Ferrand).

Possessing but one narrow bed, the mother and daughter slept by turns, dividing thus the hours of the night. The mother had too much anguish, too many inquietudes, to get much repose; but the daughter found some moments of rest and forgetfulness.

She was now asleep. Nothing could be more touching, more sorrowful, than the sight of this misery imposed by the cupidity of the notary on two women, until then accustomed to the sweet enjoyments of a life of ease, and surrounded in their native town with that consideration which an honourable and honoured family always inspire.

The Baroness de Fermont was about thirty-six years of age; her countenance at once expresses mildness and excellence; her features, formerly of remarkable beauty, are now sadly changed; her black hair, divided on her forehead and confined behind her head, already shows some tresses of silver. Clothed in a dress of mourning, tattered in several places, the Baroness de Fermont, with her hand supporting her head, leaned against the wretched bed of her child, and regarded her with inexpressible anguish.

Claire was only sixteen; her complexion had lost its dazzling purity; her beautiful dark eyelashes reached to her hollow cheeks. Once humid and rosy, but now dry and pale, her lips half-opened, displayed the enamel of her teeth; the rude contact of the bedclothes had given a red appearance in several places to the delicate neck, arms, and shoulders of the young girl. From time to time a slight shudder passed over her, as if she had some painful dream. For a long period the Baroness de Fermont had not wept; she looked on her daughter with a dry and inflamed eye, consumed by a slow fever, which was undermining her. Each day she found herself weaker; but fearing to alarm Claire, and not willing, we may say, to alarm herself, she struggled with all her strength against the first symptoms of her sickness. Through motives of similar generosity, the daughter endeavoured to conceal her sufferings. These two unhappy creatures, afflicted with the same griefs, were yet to be afflicted with the same disease.

In misfortunes there are often moments when the future prospect is so frightful, that the most energetic minds dare not look it in the face, but shut their eyes, and endeavour to deceive themselves by mad illusions. Such was the position of the Fermonts. To express the tortures of this woman, during the long hours when she was thus contemplating her sleeping child, thinking of the past, the present, and the future, would be to describe what, in the holy and sacred griefs of a mother, there is the most poignant, the most desperate, the most insane; enchanting recollections, sinister fears, terrible foresights, bitter regrets, extreme dejectedness, ejaculations of powerless rage against the author of so much misery, vain supplications, violent prayers, and, finally, frightful doubts of the all-powerful justice of him who remains inexorable to this cry, dragged from the bottom of the maternal heart—to this sacred cry, of which the echo ought to reach Heaven, "Pity for my child!"

"How cold she is now!" said the poor mother, touching lightly the icy hand and arm of her daughter. "She is very cold; one hour ago she was burning; it is fever; happily, she does not know she has it. How cold she is! this covering is so thin! I would put my old shawl on the bed; but if I take it from the door, where I have hung it, some of those drunken men will come and look through the cracks, as they did yesterday. What a horrible house! If I had known

what kind of place it was before I paid in advance, we should not have stayed here; but I did not know—when one has no papers—could I think that I should ever have need of a passport? When I left Angers in my own carriage, could I have thought—but this is infamous—because the notary has pleased to rob me, I am reduced to the most frightful extremity, and against him I can do nothing. Oh, the notary, he does not know the frightful consequences of his robbery!

"Alas! yes, I never dare tell my child my fears—not to grieve her; but I suffer; I have fever; I can hardly sustain myself; I feel within me the germs of a malady—dangerous, perhaps—my bosom is on fire; my heart throbs. Oh, if I should fall sick—if I should die! No, no! I will not—I cannot die—leave Claire—alone, abandoned in Paris—can it be possible? No! I am not sick, after all—what do I feel? A little heat, a heaviness about the head, caused, no doubt, from my uneasiness—from cold—oh, it is nothing serious!

"Come, come, no more of such weakness. It is by cherishing such ideas, it is in listening thus, that one falls really sick. And I have the time truly! Must I not occupy myself in finding some work for Claire and myself, since this man, who gave us engravings to colour"—

Then, after a pause, she added, with indignation, "Oh! this is abominable, to offer this work at the price of Claire's—to take from us this miserable means of existence, because I would not allow my child to go and work at his rooms! Perhaps we may find work elsewhere; but when one knows nobody, it is so difficult! When one is so miserably lodged they inspire no confidence; and yet, the small sum that remains once gone, what shall we do? what will become of us?

"If the laws leave this crime unpunished, I will not—for, if fate pushes me to the end—if I do not find the means to emerge from the atrocious position in which this wretch has placed me and my child, I do not know what I shall do—I shall be capable of killing him—I—this man—then they can do what they will with me.

"Yes—but my child? my child?

"To leave her alone, abandoned—ah! no, I do not wish to die! for this, I cannot kill this man. What would become of her? She at sixteen—she is young, and pure as an angel; but she is handsome—but misery, hunger, abandonment—what may they not cause? and then—and then—into what abyss may she not fall?

"Oh! it is frightful—poverty! frightful enough for anyone; but, perhaps, more so for those who have always lived in opulence. I cannot beg—I must absolutely see my child starve before I can beg! What a coward—yet"—

Two or three violent knocks at the door made her tremble, and awoke her daughter with a start.

"Mamma, what is that?" cried Claire, sitting up in bed; then throwing her arms around her mother's neck, who, very much alarmed, pressed her child to her bosom.

"Mamma, what is it?" repeated Claire.

"I do not know, my child; but do not be afraid, it is nothing; some one knocked; it is, perhaps, the letter we expect."

At this moment the worm-eaten door shook again, under repeated blows with the fist.

"Who is there?" said Madam de Fermont in a trembling voice.

A coarse, rough voice answered, "Are you deaf, neighbours?"

"What do you want? I do not know you," said Madam de Fermont, trying to conceal the agitation of her voice.

"I am Robin, your neighbour; give me some fire to light my pipe: come, make haste!"

"It is that lame man, who is always drunk," said the mother to her child.

"Are you going to give me any fire? or I'll break all open, in the name of thunder!"

"Sir, I have no fire."

"You must have some matches, then; everybody has them; do you open—come?"

"Sir, go away."

"You won't open?—one, two"—

"I beg you to go away, or I will call."

"Once—twice—three times—no, you won't! Then I'll break all down, then."

And the wretch gave such a furious kick against the door, he burst it in, the miserable lock breaking at the first assault. The two women screamed with alarm. Madam de Fermont, notwithstanding her weakness, threw herself before the rough, and barred his entrance.

"This is outrageous: you shall not come in," cried the unhappy mother; "I shall cry for help."

"For what—for what?" answered he; "mus'n't we be neighbourly? If you had opened, I should not have broken in."

Then, with the stupid obstinacy of drunkenness, he added, staggering, "I wish to come in; I will come in, and I will not go out until I light my pipe."

"I have neither fire nor matches. In the name of Heaven, sir, retire."

"Its not true; you say that so I shan't see the little one in bed. Yesterday you stopped up all the holes in the door. She is pretty; I want to see her. Take care of yourself, I'll scratch your face if you don't let me come in. I tell you that I will see the little one in bed, and I will light my pipe, or I'll smash everything, and you along with it!"

"Help! help!" cried Madam de Fermont, who felt the door giving way under a violent push of the lame man.

Intimidated by the cries, the man stepped backward and shook his fist at Madam de

Fermont, saying, "You shall pay me for this; I will return to night—I'll catch hold of your tongue, and you cannot cry."

And the Big Cripple, as they called him at Ravageurs' Island, descended the stairs, uttering horrible oaths. Madam de Fermont, fearing that he might return, and seeing the lock broken, drew the table against the door to barricade it. Claire had been so alarmed at this horrible scene, that she had fallen on her cot almost without motion, with a violent attack of the nerves. Madam de Fermont, forgetting her own alarm, ran to her daughter, pressed her in her arms, made her drink a little water, and, with the most tender caresses, succeeding in calming her.

"Be composed, my poor child—the bad man has gone away." Then the wretched mother cried, with a touching accent, "Yet it is this notary who is the cause of all our troubles. Compose yourself, my child," resumed she, tenderly embracing her daughter: "this wretch is gone."

"Oh, mamma, if he should come back again? You see you have called for help, and no one has come. Oh! I entreat you; let us leave this house, I shall die here with fear."

"How you tremble! you have a fever!"

"No, no," said the young girl, to pacify her mother; "it is nothing; it is fright; it will pass over; and you, how are you? Give me your hands. How burning hot they are! Ah! you are suffering; you wish to conceal it from me."

"Do not think so: I am better than ever; it is the emotion which this man has caused me which makes me thus; I slept on the chair very soundly; I only awoke when you did."

"Yet, mamma, your poor eyes are very red, much inflamed!"

"Ah! well, my child, on a chair, sleep is not so refreshing, you know!"

"Really, do you not suffer?"

"No, no, I assure you; and you?"

"Nor I; only I tremble still from fear. I entreat you, mamma, let us leave this house."

"And where shall we go to? You know with how much trouble we found this wretched place; and, besides, we have paid two weeks in advance; they will not return us our money; and we have so little left—so little, that we should manage as closely as possible."

"Perhaps some day M. de Saint Rémy will answer your letter."

"I no longer hope it; it is so long since I have written."

"He might not have received your letter: why do you not write him again? From hence to Angers is not so far; we shall soon have an answer."

"My poor child, you know how much this has cost me already."

"What do you risk? he is so good, notwithstanding his roughness! Was he not one of my father's old friends, and, besides, he is our relation."

"But he is poor himself; his fortune is very small. Perhaps he does not reply, to avoid the mortification of being obliged to refuse us."

"But if he has not received your letter, mamma?"

"And if he has received it, my child; of two things choose one: either he is in such a situation that he cannot come to our aid, or he feels no interest for us; then why expose ourselves to a refusal or a humiliation?"

"Come, courage, mamma, we have one hope left. Perhaps this morning will bring us a happy answer."

"From Lord d'Orbigny?"

"Without doubt. This letter, of which you formerly made a draught, was so simple, so touching—exposed so naturally our misfortunes, that he will have pity on us. Really, I do not know what tells me you are wrung to a despair of ruin."

"He has so little reason to interest himself about us: he had, it is true, formerly known your father, and I had often heard my brother speak of Lord d'Orbigny, as of a man with whom he had been on friendly terms before he left Paris with his young wife."

"It is just on that account that I have hopes; he has a young wife, she will be compassionate: and, besides, in the country, one can do so much good. He will take you, I suppose, for housekeeper; I will take care of the linen. Since Lord d'Orbigny is very rich, in a large house there is always employment."

"Yes; but we have so little right to his interest. We are so unfortunate."

"That is frequently a title in the eyes of charitable people. Let us hope that Lord d'Orbigny and his wife are so."

"Well, in the case that we need expect nothing from him, I will overcome my false shame, and will write to the Duchess de Lucenay—this lady, of whom M. de Saint Rémy spoke so often, whose generosity and good heart he so often praised? Yes, the daughter of the Prince du Noirmont. He knew her when she was very small, and he treated her almost as his child, for he was intimately connected with the prince. Madam de Lucenay must have many acquaintances; she could, perhaps find us a place."

"Doubtless, mamma, but I understand your reserve; you do not know her at all, while my poor father and uncle knew Lord d'Orbigny a little."

"Finally, in the case that Madame d'Orbigny can do nothing for us, I will have recourse to a last resource."

"What is it, mamma?"

"It is a very weak one—a very foolish hope perhaps; but why not try it? the son of M. de Saint Rémy is"—

"M. de Saint Rémy has a son," cried Claire, with astonishment.

"Yes, my child, he has a son."

"He never spoke of him—he never came to Angers."

"True, for reasons you cannot know. M. de Saint Rémy having left Paris fifteen years ago, has not seen his son since."

"Fifteen years, without seeing his father! can it be possible?"

"Alas! yes, you see. I tell you that the son of M. de Saint Rémy, being well known in the fashionable world, and very rich"—

"Very rich! and his father is poor?"

"All the fortune of M. de Saint Rémy, the son, came from his mother."

"But no matter; how can he leave his father?"

"His father would accept nothing from him."

"Why is that?"

"This is once more a question to which I cannot reply, my dear child; but I heard my poor brother say that the generosity of this young man was generally praised. Young and generous, he ought to be good. Thus, learning from me that my husband was the intimate friend of his father, perhaps he might interest himself in procuring us some work or employment; he has so many brilliant and numerous relations, that this would be easy."

"And then we could find out from him, perhaps, if M. de Saint Rémy, his father, should have left Angers before you wrote to him; that would explain his silence."

"I believe that M. de Saint Rémy, my child, has no intercourse with his father. In fine, it is only to try."

"Unless M. d'Orbigny should answer you in a favourable manner; and I repeat it, I do not know why, but, in spite of myself, I have hope."

"But, already many days have elapsed, my child, since I have written, and nothing—nothing yet. A letter put in the office before four o'clock in the afternoon, arrives the next morning at Aubiers; five days have now passed since we might have received an answer."

"Perhaps he is thinking before he writes, in what way he can be useful to us."

"God hear you, my child!"

"It appears very plain to me, mamma, if he could do nothing for us, he would have informed you at once."

"Unless he will do nothing at all."

"Ah, mamma, can it be possible? not deign to answer us, and leave us to hope four days, eight days perhaps—for when one is unfortunate, they hope always."

"Alas! my child, there is sometimes so much indifference for the woes which one does not know!"

"But your letter."

"My letter cannot give him an idea of our troubles, of our sufferings of each moment; can my letter picture to him our unfortunate life, our humiliations of every description, our existence in this frightful house, the alarm we have experienced even just now? Can my letter describe to him the horrible future which awaits us, if—but stop, my child, do not let us speak of this. Mon Dieu! you tremble—you are cold."

"No, mamma; pay no attention to it; but, tell me, suppose everything fails; that the little money which remains in that trunk is spent, can it be possible that in a rich place like Paris, we should both die of hunger and misery, for want of work, and because a bad man has taken what you had?"

"Hush, poor child."

"But, mamma, could it be?"

"Alas!"

"But God, who knows all, who can do all, how could he abandon us, he whom we have not offended?"

"I entreat you, my child, do not have such gloomy ideas; I would rather see you hope, even against hope."

"Come, rouse me up with your dear illusions; I am but too apt to be discouraged, you know well."

"Yes, yes; let us hope; it is better. The nephew of the porter will soon return from the post-office with a letter. One more errand to pay from your little treasure, and through my fault. If I had not been so feeble to-day and yesterday, we could have gone ourselves as we did before, but you would not leave me alone here to go yourself."

"Could I, my child? Judge then, just now this wretch who broke in the door, if you had been alone."

"Oh! mamma, hush; only to think of it makes me shudder."

At this moment some one knocked sharply at the door.

"Heavens, it is he," cried Madam de Fermont, and she pushed with all her strength the table against the door. Her fears, however ceased when she heard the voice of Micou.

"Madam, my nephew, André, has come from the post office. It is a letter with an X and a Z for address; it comes from a distance. There are eight sous postage and the commission—it is twenty sous."

"Mamma, a letter from the country; we are saved; it is from M. de Saint Rémy or M. d'Orbigny. Poor mother, you shall suffer no more, no longer be uneasy about me; you shall be happy. God is just—God is good!" cried the young girl, and a ray of hope lighted up her sweet and charming face.

"Oh! sir, thank you; give—give me quickly," said Madam de Fermont, pushing back the table and half-opening the door.

"It is twenty sous, madam," said the fence, showing the letter so impatiently desired.

"I am going to pay you, sir."

"Oh! madam, there is no hurry. I am going to the roof; in ten minutes I will descend, and take the money as I pass." Micou

handed the letter to Madam Fermont, and disappeared.

"The letter is from Normandy. On the stamp is *Aubiers;* it is from M. d'Orbigny!" cried Madam de Fermont, examining the address.

"Well, mamma, was I right?"

"Oh, how my heart beats! Our good or bad fortune is, however, here," said Madam de Fermont, in a faltering voice, showing the letter.

Twice her trembling hand approached the seal to break it. She had not the courage. Can one hope to paint the terrible anguish suffered by those who, like Madam de Fermont, await from a letter hope or despair?

The burning and feverish emotion of a player whose last pieces of gold are staked on a single card, and who, breathless, the eye inflamed, awaits the decisive throw which saves or ruins him for ever; this emotion, so violent, would hardly give an idea of the terrible anguish of which we speak. In an instant the soul is lifted up with the most radiant hopes, or plunged into the blackest despair. The unfortunate being passes in turn through the most contrary emotions; ineffable feelings of happiness and gratitude towards the generous heart which had pity on his sorrows—a sad and bitter resentment against the selfish or indifferent.

"What weakness!" said Madam de Fermont, with a sad smile, seating herself on the bed of her daughter; "once more, my poor Claire, our fate is there. I burn to know it, and I dare not. If it is a refusal, alas! it will be always soon enough."

"And if it should be a promise of succour? say, mamma; if this poor little letter contains good and consoling words, which will assure us as to the future, in promising us a modest employ in the house of M. d'Orbigny, each minute we lose, is it not a moment of happiness lost?"

"Yes, my child; but if, on the contrary"—

"No, mamma; you are mistaken, I am sure of it—when I told you that M. d'Orbigny would not have waited so long to answer your letter, except to give you a favourable answer. Let me look at the letter, mamma; I am sure to guess, only from the writing, if the news is good or bad. Hold, I am sure of it now," said Claire, taking the letter; "you have only to look at the bold, good, and strong hand, to see that the writer must be accustomed to give to those who suffer."

"I entreat you, Claire, no more of these foolish hopes, or I can never open the letter."

"My God! good little mamma, without opening it I can tell you what it contains; listen: Madam, your condition and that of your daughter, is so worthy of interest, that I beg you will have the goodness to come immediately to me in case you would like to take charge of my house."

"My child, once more I entreat you—no insane hopes; the reverse will be frightful. Come, courage," said Madam de Fermont, taking the letter from her daughter, and preparing to break the seal.

"Courage for you—very well!" said Claire, smiling, and carried away by a feeling of confidence so natural at her age. "As for me, I have no need of it: I am so sure of what I advance. Stop, do you wish me to open the letter? shall I read it? give it me, timid mamma."

"Yes—I would rather—here. But no, no; it is better that I should." Madam de Fermont broke the seal with indescribable emotion. Her daughter, also, in spite of her apparent confidence, could hardly breathe.

"Read it aloud, mamma," said she.

"The letter is not long; it is from the Countess d'Orbigny," said Madam de Fermont, looking at the signature.

"So much the better; it is good. Do you see, mamma, this excellent young lady has been pleased to answer you herself."

"We shall see."

"MADAM.—M. le Comte d'Orbigny, very much indisposed for some time past, could not reply to you during my absence."

"You see, mamma, it was not his fault."

"Listen, listen."

"Having arrived this morning from Paris, I hasten to write you, madam, after having conferred on the subject of your letter with M. d'Orbigny. He has but a faint recollection of the relations which you suppose to have existed between him and your brother. As to the name of your husband, madam, it is not unknown to M. d'Orbigny; but he cannot recollect under what circumstances he heard it mentioned. The pretended spoliation, of which so lightly you accuse M. Jacques Ferrand, whom we have the good fortune to have for a notary, is, in the eyes of M. d'Orbigny, a cruel calumny, of which, doubtless, you have not counted the bearing. My husband, as well as myself, madam, know and admire the well-known probity of the respectable and pious man you attack so blindly. This is to inform you, madam, that M. d'Orbigny, feeling, doubtless, for the unfortunate position in which you are placed, and of which it is not his province to find out the real cause, finds it out of his power to assist you.

"Be pleased to receive, madam, with this expression of the regrets of M. d'Orbigny, the assurance of my most distinguished sentiments. COMTESSE D'ORBIGNY."

The mother and daughter looked at each other, incapable of uttering a word.

Micou knocked at the door and said, "Madam, can I come in for the postage and commission? It is twenty sous."

"Oh! it is right; such good news! well worth what we spend in two days for our living," said Madam de Fermont, with a bitter smile; and leaving the letter on the bed, she went towards an old trunk without

a lock, stooped down, and opened it. "We are robbed!" cried the unhappy woman, with horror. "Nothing—no more;" added she, in a mournful tone. And, powerless, she leaned on the trunk.

"What do you say, mamma? The bag of money?"

But Madam de Fermont arose quickly, went out of the chamber, and, addressing the receiver, she said, with a sparkling eye, and cheeks coloured with indignation and alarm, "Sir, I had a bag of money in this trunk; some one has robbed me—yesterday, doubtless, for I went out for an hour with my daughter. This money must be found. Do you hear? You are responsible."

"Some one robbed you! It is not true; my house is honest," said the receiver, harshly and insolently. "You say that, so as not to pay me the twenty sous."

"I tell you that this money, all that I possessed in the world, some one has stolen; it must be found, or I'll make a complaint. Oh! I shall spare nothing, respect nothing—I notify you!"

"That would be very fine of you who have no papers; go and make your complaint; go at once! I defy you." The unhappy woman was overcome. She could not go out and leave her daughter alone in bed, since the fright she had received in the morning, and, above all, after the threats addressed to her by the receiver. He continued: "It is a cheat; you had no more a bag of silver than a bag of gold; you don't want to pay me the postage, hey? Good! all the same; when you pass before my door, I will tear off your old black shawl from your shoulders; it is very threadbare, but it is worth at least twenty sous."

"Oh! sir," cried Madam de Fermont, bursting into tears, "have pity on us. This small sum is all we had—my daughter and I; that stolen, we have nothing left—nothing, do you understand? nothing—but to starve."

"What would you have me to do? If it is true that you are robbed, and silver, too, it has been spent long since: the money"—

"Alas!"

"The lad who stole them would not have been simple enough to mark the money and keep it here, so that he might be caught—if it is some one in this house, which I do not believe—for, as I said only this morning to the uncle of the lady on the first floor, here is no place for plunder! if you are robbed, it is your misfortune. For should you make a hundred thousand complaints, you would not recover a sous—you would gain nothing by it, I tell you—believe me. Well," cried the receiver, seeing Madam de Fermont stagger, "what's the matter? You turn pale? Take care of your mother, she is sick," added he, advancing in time to save her from falling. The fictitious energy which had so long sustained her gave way under this new affliction.

"Mother, what is the matter?" cried Claire, still in bed.

The receiver, yet active and strong for his age, seized with a transitory feeling of pity, took Madam de Fermont in his arms, pushed open the door, and entered, saying, "Mademoiselle, pardon me for coming in while you are in bed, but I must bring in your mother; she has fainted; it can't last."

On seeing this man enter, Claire uttered a cry of alarm, and concealed herself, as well as she could, under the bedclothes. The receiver seated Madam de Fermont on the chair near the bed, and retired, leaving the door half-open, the Big Cripple having broken the lock. * * * * *

One hour after this, the violent malady, which for so long a time had threatened Madam de Fermont, showed itself. Attacked by a violent fever and frightful delirium, the unfortunate woman was laid in the bed of her child, who, alone, alarmed, and almost as ill as her mother, had neither money nor resources, and feared at any moment to see the ruffian enter who lived upon the same floor.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN THE RUE DE CHAILLOT.

We will precede, by some hours, M. Babinot, who had gone in haste to the Viscount de Saint Rémy. This last-mentioned person lived in the Rue de Chaillot, occupying a charming little house in this solitary quarter, very near the Champs Elysées, the most fashionable promenade in Paris. It is useless to enumerate the advantages which M. de Saint Rémy derived from a position so wisely chosen. We will only say, a person could enter his house very secretly, through a little garden-door, which opened on a small and very lonesome street.

In fine, by a miraculous chance, one of the finest horticultural establishments in Paris had also, in this out-of-the-way passage, an exit not much used. The mysterious visitors of Saint Rémy, in case of a surprise or unlooked-for rencontre, were armed with a pretext perfectly plausible and rural for having adventured in the lane. They went (they might say) to choose rare flowers at a celebrated florist's, renowned for the beauty of his conservatories. These visitors, besides, would only have told half a falsehood; the viscount, with distinguished taste, had a charming green-house, which extended, in part, along the little street we have spoken of; the little door opened into this delicious winter garden, which reached a boudoir situated on the ground-floor of the house.

Madam de Lucenay had demanded a key of this little door. The interior of the mansion of Saint Rémy presented a singular appearance; it was divided into two establishments—the ground-floor, where he received ladies;

the first story, where he received gentlemen to dinner and play; in fine, those he called his friends.

Thus, on the ground-floor was a room which shone with gold, mirrors, flowers, silks, and lace; a small music-room, where were a harp and pianos (Saint Rémy was an excellent musician), a cabinet of pictures and curiosities, the boudoir communicating with the green-house, a dining-room, a bathing-room, and a small library. It is useless to say that all these rooms, furnished with exquisite taste, had for ornaments some Watteaus but little known, some Bouchers unheard of, groups of statuary in biscuit; and on their stands of jasper, a few valuable copies, in white marble, of some of the finest groups of the "Musée." Joined to this, in summer, for perspective, the deep shade of a verdant garden; quiet, loaded with flowers, peopled with birds, watered by a little brook of living water, which, before it spreads itself over the short grass, falls from a black and rustic rock, shining like a riband of silver gauze, and is lost in a pearly wave, in a limpid basin, where two fine swans show their graceful forms.

And when night came, calm and serene, how much shade, how much perfume, what silence in sweet-scented groves, whose thick foliage served as a canopy to the rustic sofas made of reeds and Indian mats.

In the winter, on the contrary, except the glass which opened into the conservatory, all was closed; the transparent silk of the blinds, the heavy mass of lace and muslin curtains, rendered the light still more mysterious; on every disposable place large masses of exotics seemed to spring out of vases glittering with gold and enamel.

Such was the viscount. At Athens he would have been, doubtless, admired, exalted, deified, as the equal of Alcibiades; at the time of which we speak, the viscount was nothing more than an unworthy forger, a miserable cheat.

The first story had an entirely different appearance, altogether masculine. There was nothing coquettish, nothing feminine; the furniture was of a style simple and serene; for ornaments, fire-arms, pictures of race-horses, which had earned for the viscount a good number of gold and silver vases, placed on the tables; the *tabogie* (smoking-room) and the saloon for play joined a lively-looking dining-room, where eight persons (the number always strictly limited when it was a question of a choice meal) had often appreciated the excellence of the cook, and the not less excellent merit of the cellar, before commencing with him some games of whist for five or six hundred Louis, or to rattle the noisy dice-box.

The apartments being thus thrown open to the reader, he will now please to follow us to more familiar regions, to enter the carriage-court, and mount the little staircase which leads to the very comfortable room of Edward Patterson, chief of the stables.

This illustrious coachman had invited to breakfast M. Boyer, confidential valet de chambre of the viscount. A very pretty English servant-girl having retired, after having brought in a silver teapot, our two gentlemen were left alone.

Edward was was about forty years of age; never did a more skilful or fatter coachman cause his seat to groan under a rotundity more imposing, nor to ornament with a powdered wig a face more rubicund, nor to collect more elegantly, in his left hand, the quadruple ribands of a four-in-hand; as good a judge of horses as Tattersall of London, having been, in his youth, as good a trainer as the celebrated elder Chifney, the viscount had found in Edward a rare thing, an excellent coachman and a man very capable of directing the training of some race-horses which he had had for wagers. Edward, when he did not display his sumptuous brown and silver livery on the emblazoned hammer-cloth of his seat, looked very much like an honest English farmer; it is under this guise we now shall present him to our readers, adding, that in his broad and red face one could easily perceive the diabolical and unmerciful cunning of a horse-jockey.

M. Boyer, his guest, the confidential valet, was a tall, slender man, with gray hair, rather bald, and with a sly, cool, discreet, and reserved expression; he used very choice language, had polite, easy manners, rather literary, political opinions of the conservative stamp, and could creditably play his part of first violin in a quartet of amateurs; at short intervals he took, with the best grace in the world, a pinch of snuff from a golden box mounted with fine pearls, after which he brushed negligently, with back of his hand, the folds of his fine linen shirt, quite as fine as that of his master.

"Do you know, my dear Edward," said Boyer, "that your servant, Betty, makes quite a supportable plain cook?"

"She is a good girl," said Edward, who spoke French perfectly, "and I shall take her with me if I should decide on housekeeping; and on this subject, since we are here alone, my dear Boyer, let us talk business; you understand it very well."

"Why, yes, a little," said Boyer, modestly, and taking a pinch of snuff. "That is learned so naturally, when one occupies himself with the affairs of others."

"I have, then, very important advice to ask of you; it is on this account that I begged the favour of your company to a cup of tea this morning."

"Quite at your service, my dear Edward."

"You know that besides the race-horses, I had a contract with my lord for the complete maintenance of his stables, cattle, and people; that is to say, eight horses and five or six grooms and jockeys, for the sum of

twenty-four thousand francs a year, my wages included."

"It was reasonable."

"During four years, my lord punctually paid me; but about the middle of last year he said to me, 'Patterson, I owe you about twenty-four thousand francs; how much do you estimate, at the lowest price, my horses and vehicles?' 'My lord, the eight horses would not sell for less than three thousand francs each, one with the other, and then they would be given away (and it is true, Boyer, for the phaeton pair cost five hundred guineas), that would make twenty-four thousand francs for the horses. As to the carriages, there are four, say twelve thousand francs, which, in all, would make thirty-six thousand francs.' 'Well!' answered my lord, 'buy them all from me at this price, on condition that, for the twelve thousand francs remaining after your claim is paid, you will keep and leave at my disposition, horses, servants and carriages for six months.'"

"And you wisely agreed to the bargain? It was a golden affair."

"Certainly it was; in two weeks the six months will have expired, and I enter into possession."

"Nothing can be plainer. The papers were drawn up by M. Badinot, the viscount's agent. In what have you need of my advice?"

"What ought I to do? Sell the establishment on account of my lord's departure (and it will sell well), or shall I set up as a horse-dealer, with my stable, which will make a fine beginning? What do you advise?"

"I advise you to do what I shall do myself."

"How?"

"I am in the same position that you are."

"How?"

"My lord detests details. When I came here I had, through economy and by inheritance, some sixty thousand francs. I paid the expenses of the house, as you did the stables. About the same time that you did, I found myself in advance some twenty thousand francs; and for those who furnished the supplies, some sixty thousand. Then the viscount proposed to me, as he did to you, to reimburse myself by buying of him the furniture of the house, comprising the plate—which is fine—the pictures, and so on; the whole estimated at the very lowest price, one hundred and forty thousand francs. There were eighty thousand francs to pay; with the remainder I engaged, as long as it lasted, to defray the expenses of the table, servants, and so forth, and for nothing else: it was a condition of the bargain."

"Because that on these expenses you would gain something more."

"Necessarily; for I have made arrangements with those who furnish the supplies that I will not pay until after the sale," said Boyer, taking a huge pinch of snuff "so that at the end of this month"—

"The furniture is yours, as the horses and carriages are mine."

"Evidently. My lord has gained by this, to live as he always liked to live, to the last moment—as a tip-top don—in the very teeth of his creditors; for furniture, silver, horses, vehicles, all had been paid for at his coming of age, and had become my property and yours."

"Then my lord is ruined?"

"In five years."

"And how much did he inherit?"

"Only a poor little million, cash down," said M. Boyer, quite disdainfully, taking another pinch of snuff. "Add to this million about two hundred thousand francs of debts, it is passable. It is then, to tell you, my dear Edward, that I have had an idea of letting this house, admirably furnished as it is, to some English people. Some of your compatriots would have paid well for it."

"Without doubt. Why do you not do it?"

"Yes, but fancy things are risky, so I have decided to sell. My lord is so well known as a connoisseur, that everything would bring a double price, so that I should realise a round sum. Do as I shall Edward: realise, realise, and do not adventure your earnings in speculations. You! chief coachman of the Viscount de Saint Rémy! It will be, who can get you. Only yesterday some one spoke to me of a minor just of age, a cousin of the Duchesse de Lucenay, young Duke de Montbrison, arrived from Italy with his tutor, and about seeing life. Two hundred and fifty thousand livres income, in good land; and just entering into life—twenty years old. All the illusions of confidence—all the infatuation of expense—prodigal as a prince. I know the intendant. I can tell you this in confidence: he has already nearly agreed with me as first valet de chambre. He countenances me, the flat!" And M. Boyer shrugged his shoulders again, having recourse to his snuff-box.

"You hope to foist him out?"

"Rather! he is imbecile or impertinent. He puts me there as if he had no fear of me! Before two months are over I shall be in his place."

"Two hundred and fifty thousand livres income!" said Edward, reflecting, "and a young man. It is a good seat."

"I will tell you what there is to do. I will speak for you to my protector," said M. Boyer, ironically. "Enter there—it is a fortune which has roots, to which one can hang on for a long time. Not this miserable million of the viscount's—a real snowball—one ray of Parisian sun, and all is over. I saw here that I should only be a bird of passage: it is a pity, for this house does us honour; and up to the last moment, I will serve my lord with the respect and esteem which are his due."

"My dear Boyer, I thank you, and accept your proposition; but suppose I was to propose to the young duke this stable? It is all

ready; it is known and admired by all Paris."

"Exactly so; you might make a mint."

"But why do you not propose this house to him, so admirably furnished? What can he find better?"

"Edwards, you are a man of mind; it does not surprise me, but you give me an excellent idea. We must address ourselves to my lord; he is so good a master that he would not refuse to speak for us to the young duke. He can tell him that, leaving for the Legation of Gerolstein, where he is an *attaché*, he wishes to dispose of his whole establishment. Let us see: one hundred and sixty thousand francs for the house, all furnished, plate and pictures; fifty thousand francs for the stable and carriages; that makes two hundred and thirty thousand to two hundred and forty thousand francs. It is an excellent affair for a young man who wants everything. He would spend three times this amount before he could get anything half so elegant and select together as this establishment; for it must be acknowledged, Edward, there is no one can equal my lord in knowing how to live."

"And horses!"

"And good cheer! Godefroi, his cook, leaves here a hundred times better than when he came. My lord has given him excellent counsels—has enormously refined him."

"Besides, they say my lord is such a good player."

"Admirable! Gaining large sums with even more indifference than he loses; and yet I have never seen any lose more gallantly."

"What is he going to do now?"

"Set out for Germany, in a good travelling-carriage, with seven or eight thousand francs, which he knows how to get. Oh! I feel no embarrassment about my lord: he is one who always falls on his feet, as they say."

"And he has no more money to inherit?"

"None; for his father has only a small competency."

"His father?"

"Certainly."

"My lord's father is not dead?"

"He was not about five or six months since. We wrote to him for some family papers."

"But he never comes here?"

"For a good reason. These fifteen years he has lived in the country, at Angers."

"But my lord never goes to see him?"

"His father?"

"Yes."

"Never, never—not he!"

"Have they quarrelled?"

"What I am going to tell you is no secret, for I had it from the confidential agent of the Prince de Noirmont."

"The father of Madam de Lucenay?" said Edward, with a cunning and significant look, of which Boyer, faithful to his habits of reserve and discretion, took no notice, but resumed, coldly,

"The Duchess de Lucenay is the daughter of the Prince de Noirmont; the father of my lord was intimately connected with the prince. The duchess was then very young, and Saint Rémy the elder treated her as familiarly as if she had been his own child. Notwithstanding his sixty years, he is a man of iron character, courageous as a lion, and of a probity that I shall permit myself to designate as marvellous. He possessed almost nothing, and had married, from love, the mother of the viscount, a young person rather rich, who brought a million at the christening of which we have just had the honour to assist," and Boyer made a low bow. Edward did the same.

"The marriage was very happy until the moment when my lord's father found, as was said, by chance, some devilish letters, which proved evidently that, during an absence, some three or four years after his marriage, his wife had had a tender weakness for a certain Polish count."

"That often happens to the Poles. When I lived with the Marquis de Senneval, Madam the Marchioness—*une enragée*"—

Boyer interrupted his companion. "You should know, my dear Edward, the alliances of our great families before you speak, otherwise you reserve for yourself cruel mistakes."

"How?"

"The Marchioness of Senneval is the sister of the Duke of Montbrison, where you desire to engage."

"Oh!—the devil!"

"Judge of the effect, if you had spoken of her in this manner before the envious or detractors: you would not have remained twenty-four hours in the house."

"It is true, Boyer. I will try to know the alliances."

"I resume. The father of my lord discovered, then, after twelve or fifteen years of a marriage, until then happy, that he had reason to complain of a Polish count. Fortunately or unfortunately, the viscount was born nine months after his father, or rather, Saint Rémy had returned from this fatal journey, so that he could not be certain whether it was his child or not. Nevertheless, the count separated at once from his wife, not wishing to touch a sous of the fortune she had brought him, and retired to the country, with about eighty thousand francs which he possessed; but you shall see the rancour of this diabolical character. Although the outrage was dated back fifteen years when he discovered it, yet he set off, accompanied by M. de Fermont, one of his relations, in pursuit of the Pole, and found him at Venice, after having sought for him in almost all the cities of Europe."

"What an obstinate!"

"A devilish rancour, I tell you, my dear Edward! At Venice, a terrible duel was fought, in which the Pole was killed. All was done fairly; but, my lord's father showed,

they say, such ferocious joy at seeing the Pole mortally wounded, that his relation, M. de Fermont, was obliged to drag him away; the count wishing to see, as he said, his enemy expire under his eyes.

"What a man! what a man!"

"The count returned to Paris, went to the house of his wife, announced to her that he had just returned from killing the Pole, and left her. Since then, he has never seen her nor her son, but has lived at Angers, like a real 'wehr-wolf' as they say, with what remains of his eighty thousand francs, well curtailed, as you may suppose, by his race after this Pole. At Angers he sees no one, except the wife and daughter of his relation, M. de Fermont, who has been dead for some years. And, besides, it would seem as if this was an unfortunate family, for the brother of Madam de Fermont blew his brains out a few weeks since, it is said."

"And the viscount's mother?"

"He lost her a long time since. It is on that account that my lord, on his coming of age, has enjoyed the fortune of his mother. So you plainly see, my dear Edward, that as regards inheritance, my lord has nothing, or almost nothing, to expect from his father."

"Who besides must detest him?"

"He would never see him after the fatal discovery, persuaded that he is the son of the Pole."

The conversation of the two personages was interrupted by a footman of gigantic size, carefully powdered, although it was hardly eleven o'clock.

"His lordship has rung twice," said the giant.

Boyer appeared distressed at this neglect; he arose precipitately, and followed the servant with as much eagerness and respect as if he had not been the proprietor of the mansion of his master.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE OLD COUNT DE SAINT REMY.

TWO hours had passed since Boyer had gone to attend the viscount, when the father of the last mentioned knocked at the gate of the house in the Rue de Chaillot.

The Count de Saint Rémy was a man of tall stature, still active and vigorous, notwithstanding his age; the almost copper colour of his skin contrasted strangely with the silvery whiteness of his beard and hair; his heavy, still black eyebrows overshadowed piercing but sunken eyes. Although, from a kind of misanthropy, he wore clothes quite rusty, there was in his whole appearance that which commanded respect. The door of his son's house flew open, and he entered. A porter, in a grand livery of brown and silver, profusely powdered, and wearing silk stockings, appeared on the threshold of an elegant lodge, which had as much resemblance to the smoky den of the Pipelets as a cobbler's stall could have to the sumptuous shop of a fashionable "emporium."

"M. de Saint Rémy?" demanded the viscount, in a low tone.

The porter, instead of replying, examined with much contempt the white beard, the threadbare coat, and the old hat of the stranger, who held in his hand a large cane.

"M. de Saint Rémy?" repeated the count, impatiently, shocked at the impertinent examination of the porter.

"Not at home." So saying, Pipelet's rival drew the cord, and with a significant gesture, invited the unknown to retire.

"I will wait," said the count, and he passed on.

"Stay, friend! one does not enter that way into houses!" cried the porter, running after and taking him by the arm.

"How, scoundrel!" answered the old man, raising his cane; "you dare to touch me!"

"I will dare something else, if you do not walk out at once. I have told you that my lord was out, so walk off."

At this moment, Boyer, attracted by the sound of voices, made his appearance. "What is the matter?" demanded he.

"M. Boyer, this man will absolutely enter, although I have told him that my lord is out."

"Let us put a stop to this," replied the count, addressing Boyer; "I wish to see my son—if he has gone out, I will wait."

We have said that Boyer was ignorant neither of the existence nor of the misanthrophy of the father, and sufficiently a physiognomist, he did not for a moment doubt the identity of the count, but bowed low to him, and answered, "If your lordship will be so good as to follow me, I am at his orders."

"Go on," said Saint Rémy, who accompanied Boyer, to the profound dismay of the porter.

Preceded by the valet, the count arrived on the first story, and still following his guide, was ushered into a little saloon, situated immediately over the boudoir of the ground floor.

"My lord has been obliged to go out this morning," said Boyer, "and if your lordship will have the kindness to wait, it will not be long before he returns." And the valet disappeared.

Remaining alone, the count looked around him with indifference, until suddenly he discovered the picture of his wife, the mother of Florestan de Saint Rémy. He folded his arms on his heart, held down his head, as if to avoid the sight of this victim, and walked about with rapid steps.

"And yet I am not certain—he may be my son—sometimes this doubt is frightful to me. If he is my son, then my abandoning him, my refusal ever to see him, are unpardonable. And then to think my name—of which I have ever been so proud, belongs to the son of a

man whose heart I could have torn out! Oh! I do not know why I am not bereft of my senses when I think of it." Saint Rémy, continuing to walk with agitation, raised mechanically the curtain which separated the saloon from Florestan's study and entered the apartment.

He had hardly disappeared for a moment, than a small door, concealed by the tapestry, opened softly, and Madam de Lucenay, wrapped in a shawl of green Cashmere, and wearing a very plain black velvet bonnet, entered the saloon which the count had just left. The duchess, as we have said before, had a key to the little private garden-door; not finding Florestan in the apartments below, she had supposed that, perhaps, he was in his study, and without any fear had come up by a small staircase which led from the boudoir to the first story. Unfortunately, a very threatening visit from M. Badinot had obliged him to go out precipitately.

Madam de Lucenay, seeing no one, was about to enter the cabinet, when the curtains were thrown back, and she found herself face to face with the father of Florestan. She could not restrain a cry of alarm.

"Clotilde!" cried the count, stupified.

The duchess remained immovable, contemplating with surprise the old white-bearded man so badly clothed, whose features did not appear altogether strange.

"You, Clotilde!" repeated the count, in a tone of sorrowful reproach, "you here—in my son's house?"

These last words decided Madam de Lucenay; she at length recognised the father of Florestan, and cried: "M. de Saint Rémy!" Her position was so plain and significant, that the duchess disdained to have recourse to a falsehood to explain the motive of her presence in this house; counting on the paternal affection which the count had formerly shown her, she extended her hand, and said, with an air—gracious, cordial, and fearless—which belonged only to her, "Come, do not scold! you are my oldest friend! Do you remember, more than twenty years ago, you called me your dear Clotilde?"

"Yes, I called you thus, but"—

"I know in advance all that you will say to me; you know my motto: *What is, is; what shall be, shall be.*"

"Ah, Clotilde!"

"Spare me your reproaches; let me rather speak to you of my joy at seeing you! your presence recalls so many things; my poor father, in the first place; and then my fifteenth year. Ah! fifteen—sweet fifteen!"

"It is because your father was my friend, that"—

"Oh, yes!" answered the duchess, interrupting them, "he loved you so much! Do you remember he called you, laughingly, 'Green Riband.' You always said to him, 'You will spoil Clotilde; take care!' and he would answer, embracing me, 'I believe I spoil her; and I must hurry and spoil her more, for soon fashion will carry her off, and spoil her in its turn.' Excellent father that I lost!"

A tear glistened in the fine eyes of Madam Lucenay, and giving her hand to Saint Rémy, she said to him, in an agitated voice, "True, I am happy, very happy to see you again: you awaken souvenirs so precious, so dear to my heart! If you have been in Paris for any time," continued Madam de Lucenay, "it was very unkind in you not to come to see me; we should have talked so much of the past; for you know I begin to arrive at the age when there is a great charm in talking to old friends."

Perhaps the duchess could not have spoken with more *nonchalance* if she had been receiving a visit at Lucenay House.

Saint Rémy could not refrain from saying, earnestly, "Instead of talking of the past, let us talk of the present. My son may come in at any moment, and"—

"No!" said Clotilde, interrupting him, "I have the key of the private door, and his arrival is always announced by a bell when he comes in by the gate; at this noise I shall disappear as mysteriously as I came, and leave you alone. What a sweet surprise you are going to cause him! you, who have for so long a time abandoned him!"

"Hold! I have reproaches to make you."

"To me, to me?"

"Certainly! What guide, what assistance had I on entering into society? and, for a thousand things, the counsels of a father are indispensable. Thus, frankly, it has been very wrong in you to"—

Here Madam de Lucenay, giving way to the peculiarity of her character, could not prevent herself from laughing heartily, and saying to the count: "You must avow that the position is at least singular, and that it is very piquant that I should preach to you!"

"It is rather strange; but I deserve neither your sermons nor your praises. I come to my son; but it is not on account of my son. At his age he can no longer need my counsels."

"What do you mean?"

"You must know for what reasons I detest society and hold Paris in horror!" said the count. "Nothing but circumstances of the last importance could have induced me to leave Angers, and, above all, to come here—in this house! But I have conquered my repugnance, and have recourse to every one who can aid me in researches of great interest to me."

"Oh! then," said Madam de Lucenay, with most affectionate eagerness, "I beg you dispose of me, if I can be of any use to you. Is there need of any applications? M. de Lucenay ought to have a certain influence; for, on the days when I go to dine with my great aunt De Montbrison, he gives a dinner

at home to some deputies; this is not done without some motive; this inconvenience must be paid for by some probable advantage. Once more, if we can serve you, command us. There is my young cousin, Duke de Montbrison, connected with all the nobility, perhaps he could do something? In this case, I offer him to you. In a word, dispose of me and mine; you know if I can call myself a devoted friend!"

"I know it; and I do not refuse your assistance; although, however—"

"Come, my dear *Alceste*, we are people of the world, let us act like such; whether we are here or elsewhere, it is of no import, I suppose, to the affair which interests you, and which now interests me extremely, since it is yours. Let us speak of this, and siccerely; I require it."

Thus saying, the duchess approached the fireplace, and, leaning against it, she put out the prettiest little foot in the world to warm it.

With perfect tact, Madame de Lucenay seized the occasion to speak no more of the viscount, and to converse with M. de Saint Rémy on a subject to which he attached much importance.

"You are ignorant, perhaps, Clotilde," said the count, "that for a long time past I have lived at Angers?"

"No—I knew it."

"Notwithstanding the isolated state I sought, I had chosen this city, because one of my relations dwelt there, M. de Fermont, who, during my troubles, acted as a brother towards me, having acted as a second in a duel."

"Yes, a terrible duel; my father told me of it," said Madame de Lucenay, sadly; "but happily, Florestan is ignorant of this duel, and also of the cause that led to it."

"I was willing to let him respect his mother," answered the count, and, suppressing a sigh, he continued, and related to Madame de Lucenay the history of Madame de Fermont up to the time of her leaving Angers for Paris.

That history, if the old count had known and related it all, would have run thus. Baron de Fermont's brother, ruined by concealed speculations, had left three hundred thousand francs with Jacques Ferrand. But when the baroness, upon her brother's suicide in desperation, and her husband's death, had claimed it from that honourable man, the notary had challenged her to produce proofs, of which she had not one, and had, moreover, met her with a demand for two thousand francs, a debt of the baron's to the notary. So she began to suffer every hardship from this abuse of trust. Presuming this, we let the count proceed:

"At the end of some time," said he, "I learned that the furniture of the house which she occupied at Angers was sold by her orders, and that this sum had been employed to pay some debts left by Madame de Fermont. Uneasy at this circumstance, I inquired, and learned vaguely that this unfortunate woman and her daughter were in distress—the victims, doubtless, of a bankruptcy. If Madame de Fermont could, in such an extremity, count on any one, it was on me. Yet I received no news from her. You cannot imagine my sufferings—my inquietude. It was absolutely necessary that I should find them, to know why they did not apply to me, poor as I was. I set out for Paris, leaving a person at Angers, who, if by chance any information was obtained, was to advise me."

"Well?"

"Yesterday I had a letter from Angers; nothing was known. On arriving here I commenced my researches. I went first to the former residence of the brother of Madame de Fermont. Here they told me she lived by the Canal Saint Martin."

"And this"—

"Had been her lodgings; but she had left, and they were ignorant of her new abode. Since then all my inquiries have been useless; and I have come here, in hopes that she may have applied to the son of her old friend. I am afraid that even this will be in vain."

For some minutes Madam de Lucenay had listened to the count with redoubled attention; suddenly she said, "Truly, it would be singular if these should be the same as those Madam d'Harville is so much interested for."

"Who?" asked the count.

"The widow of whom you speak is still young, and of a noble presence?"

"She is so. But how do you know?"

"Her daughter handsome as an angel, and about sixteen?"

"Yes, yes!"

"And is named Claire?"

"Oh, in mercy, speak! where are they?"

"Alas, I know not!"

"You do not know?"

"A lady of my acquaintance, Madam d'Harville, came to me to ask if I knew a widow who had a daughter named Claire, and whose brother had committed suicide. Madam d'Harville came to me because she had seen these words, 'Write to Madam de Lucenay,' traced on the fragment of a letter which this unhappy woman had written to a person unknown, whose aid she entreated."

"She intended to write to you! Why?"

"I am ignorant: I do not know her."

"But she knew you!" cried Saint Rémy, struck with a sudden idea.

"What do you say?"

"A hundred times she has heard me speak of your father, of you, of your generous and excellent heart. In her trouble, she must have thought of you."

"This can be thus explained."

"And how did Madam d'Harville get possession of this letter?"

"I am ignorant; all I know is, that, with-

out knowing where this poor mother and child had taken refuge, she was, I believe, on their track."

"Then I count upon you, Clotilde, to introduce me to Madam d'Harville; I must see her to-day."

"Impossible! Her husband has just fallen a victim to a frightful accident. A gun, which he did not know was loaded, went off while in his hands, and killed him on the spot."

"Oh, this is horrible!"

"She departed immediately, to pass her first mourning at her father's in Normandy."

"Clotilde, I conjure you to write to her to-day; ask for whatever information she may possess. Since she interests herself for these poor women, tell her she cannot have a warmer auxiliary than me; my sole desire is to find the widow of my friend, and to partake with her and her daughter the little I possess. It is now my sole family."

"Always the same—always generous and devoted! Count on me; I will write to-day to Madam d'Harville. Where shall I send her answer?"

"To Asnières, poste restante."

"What eccentricity! Why do you lodge there and not at Paris?"

"I hate Paris, on account of the souvenirs it awakens," answered Saint Rémy, with a gloomy air. "My old physician, Dr. Griffin, has a small country-house on the banks of the Seine, near Asnières; he does not live there in winter, and offered it to me; it is almost a suburb of Paris; I could, after my researches, find there the solitude which pleases me; I have accepted."

"I will write you, then, at Asnières; I can, besides, give you now some information which may perhaps serve you, which I received from Madam d'Harville. The ruin of Madam Fermont has been caused by the roguery of the notary who had the charge of all her fortune. He denies the deposit."

"The scoundrel! What is the fellow's name?"

"Jacques Ferrand," said the duchess, without being able to conceal her desire to laugh.

"What a strange being you are, Clotilde! There is nothing in all this but what is serious and sad, yet you laugh!" said the count, surprised and vexed.

"Pardon me, my friend," answered the duchess; "the notary is such a singular man, and they tell such strange things of him. But, seriously, if his reputation as an honest man is no more merited than his reputation as a pious man (and I declare this usurped), he is a wretch!"

"And he lives"—

"Rue du Sentier."

"He shall have a visit from me. What you have told me coincides with certain suspicions."

"What suspicions?"

"From what I can learn respecting the death of the brother of my poor friend, I am almost led to believe that this unfortunate man, instead of committing suicide, has been the victim of an assassination."

"Goodness! What makes you suppose this?"

"Several reasons, too long to tell you. I leave you now."

"You leave without seeing Florestan?"

"This interview would be too painful for me—you must comprehend. I only braved it in the hopes of obtaining some information about Madam de Fermont, wishing to neglect no means to find her. Now, adieu!"

"Oh, you are without pity!"

"Do you not know?"

"I know that your son has never had more need of your counsels."

"Is he not rich—happy?"

"Yes; but he does not know mankind. Blindly prodigal, because he is confiding and generous—in everything, everywhere, and always truly noble. I fear he is abused. If you knew what a noble heart he has! I have never dared to lecture him on the subject of his expenses and extravagance: in the first place, because I am at least as foolish as he is; and then—for other reasons; but you, on the contrary, could"—

Madam de Lucenay did not finish; suddenly she heard the voice of Florestan de Saint Rémy. He entered precipitately into the cabinet adjoining the saloon. After having quickly shut the door, he said, in an agitated voice, to some one who accompanied him, "But it is impossible!"

"But I repeat to you," answered the clear and piercing voice of M. Badinot, "I repeat to you, that, without this, in four hours you will be arrested. For if he has not this money, our man will go and make a complaint to the attorney-general, and you know the penalty of a forgery like this—the galleys, my poor lord!"

It is impossible to describe the look which Madam de Lucenay and the father of Florestan exchanged on hearing these terrible words.

CHAPTER XXX.

FATHER AND SON.

N hearing these fearful words addressed to his son by Badinot, the count changed colour, and clung to a chair for support. His venerable and respected name dishonoured by a man whom he had reason to doubt was his son? His first feeling overcome, the angry looks of the old man, and a threatening gesture which he made as he advanced towards the study, revealed a resolution so alarming, that Madam de Lucenay caught him by the hand, stopped him, and said, in a low tone, with the most profound conviction, "He is innocent; I swear to you! Listen in silence."

The count stood still; he wished to believe what the duchess had said was true.

She, on her part, was persuaded of his honesty. To obtain new sacrifices from this woman, so blindly generous—sacrifices which alone had saved him from the threats of Jacques Ferrand—the viscount had sworn to Madame de Lucenay, that, dupe of a scoundrel from whom he had received in payment the forged bill, he ran the risk of being regarded as an accomplice of the forger, having himself put it in circulation.

Madame de Lucenay knew that the viscount was imprudent, prodigal, and careless; but never for a moment had she supposed him capable of an infamous action, not even the slightest indiscretion.

By twice lending him considerable sums under very peculiar circumstances, she had wished to render him a friendly service, the viscount only accepting this money on the express condition of returning it; for there was due to him, he said, more than twice this amount.

His apparent luxurious manner of living allowed her to believe it. Besides, Madame de Lucenay, yielding to her natural kind impulses, had only thought of being useful to Florestan, without any care whether he could repay or not. He affirmed it, and she did not doubt. In answering for the viscount's honour, in supplicating the old count to listen to the conversation of his son, the duchess thought that he was going to speak of the abuse of confidence, of which he had been a victim, and that he would be thus entirely exculpated in the eyes of his father.

"Once more," continued Florestan, in an agitated voice, "I say this Petit Jean is a scoundrel; he assured me that he had no other bills than those I withdrew yesterday, and three days ago. I thought this one was in circulation; it was payable three months after date, at Adams & Co., London?"

"Yes, yes," said the clear and sharp voice of Badinot. "I know, my dear viscount, that you have adroitly managed your affairs; your forgeries were not to be discovered until you were far away. But you have been caught by those more cunning than yourself."

"Oh! it is very well to tell me this now, wretch that you are!" cried Florestan, furiously; "did you not yourself introduce this person to me, who has negociated the paper?"

"Come, my dear aristocrat," answered Badinot, coldly, "be calm! You are very skilful in counterfeiting commercial signatures; it is really wonderful; but that is no reason why you should treat your friends with disagreeable familiarity. If you go on in this way—I leave you to arrange as you please."

"Do you think one can preserve calmness in such a position? If what you tell me is true—if this complaint is lodged against me to-day, I am lost."

"It is exactly as I tell you, unless you should have recourse again to your charming providence with the blue eyes."

"That is impossible."

"Then be resigned. It is a pity it was the last note! for twenty-five thousand paltry francs, to go and take the air of the south at Toulon—it is ridiculous, absurd, stupid! How could a cunning man like you suffer yourself to be thus cornered?"

"What is to be done? what is to be done? nothing here belongs to me; I have not twenty louis of my own."

"Your friends?"

"Oh! I owe to all who could lend me; do you think me such a fool as to have waited until to-day to ask them?"

"That is true; pardon me—come, let us talk tranquilly, it is the best way to arrive at a reasonable solution. Just now I wanted to tell you how you were attacked by those who were more cunning than yourself. You did not listen to me."

"Well, speak, if it can be of any use."

"Let us recapitulate: you said to me about two months since, 'I have about one hundred and thirteen thousand francs in bills on different banking-houses, which have some time to run, can you find means to negociate them for me, my dear Badinot'"—

"Well! what next?"

"Stop! I asked to see them. Something told me that the bills were forgeries, although perfectly well done. I did not suspect that you, it is true, possessed a caligraphic talent so far advanced; but having the charge of your fortunes, ever since you had no more fortune, I knew you were completely ruined. I had drawn up the deed by which your horses, your carriages, the furniture of this hotel, belonged to Boyer and Patterson. It was not wonderful for me to be astonished at seeing you possess commercial securities of so much value, was it?"

"Do me the favour to spare me your astonishment, and let us arrive at the facts."

"Here they are. I had not enough experience or timidity to care to meddle directly in affairs of that description; I recommended a third person to you, who, not less sharpsighted than I am, suspected the game you wished to play."

"That is impossible—he would not have discounted these bills if he had thought them false."

"How much money did he give you for the one hundred and thirteen thousand francs?"

"Twenty-five thousand francs cash, and the remainder in debts to be recovered."

"And how much did you ever recover from these?"

"Nothing, you know well enough; they were imaginary; but he certainly risked twenty-five thousand francs."

"How unfledged you are, my dear lord! Having my commission of a hundred louis to

ceive, I took good care not to tell this third person the real state of your affairs. He thought you still quite rich, and he knew, besides, that you were adored by a great lady, who was very rich, and who would never leave you in embarrassment; he was then pretty sure to get back what he advanced; he ran some risk, to be sure; but he also had a chance of making a great deal of money, and his calculation was a good one; for, the other day you paid him one hundred thousand francs to withdraw the forgery of fifty-eight thousand francs, and yesterday thirty thousand francs for the second; for this last, he had been contented with receiving its real value. How you procured these thirty thousand francs yesterday may the devil run away with me if I know! for you are a man unique. So you see that at the end of the account, if Petit Jean forces you to pay the last draft for twenty-five thousand francs, he will have received from you one hundred and fifty-five thousand francs for twenty-five thousand francs which he paid you; now, I had reason to say that you were in the hands of those more cunning than yourself."

"But why did he tell me that this last bill, which he presented to day, was negociated?"

"Not to alarm you, he also had told you that, with the exception of the fifty-eight thousand francs, the others were in circulation; the first, once paid, yesterday came the second, and to-day the third."

"The scoundrel!"

"Listen to me, then: every one for himself, as a celebrated lawyer said, and I like the maxim. But let us talk coolly; this proves to you that Petit Jean (and, between us, I should not be surprised if, notwithstanding his holy reputation, Jacques Ferrand was half concerned in these speculations), this proves to you, I say, that Petit Jean, allured by your first payments, speculates on this last bill, quite sure that your friends will not allow you to be dragged before the judges. It is for you to see if these friends are so well used, so drained that not another golden drop can be squeezed from them, for, if in three hours you have not the twenty-five thousand francs, my noble lord, you are caged."

"If you were to repeat this to me for ever"—

"Perhaps you would consent to pluck a last feather from the wing of that generous duchess."

"I repeat to you, it must not be thought of. To find in three hours twenty-five thousand francs more, after all the sacrifices she has already made—it would be madness to think of it."

"To please you, fortunate mortal, one would try an impossibility."

"Oh! she has already tried it; this was to borrow one hundred thousand francs from her husband, and she succeeded; but these are experiments that cannot be tried twice. Let us see, my dear Badinot, until now you have never had any reason to complain of me. I have always been generous; try to obtain some delay from this miserable Petit Jean. You know I always can find means to recompense those who serve me; this last affair once hushed, I will take a new flight—you shall be content with me."

"Petit Jean is as inflexible as you are unreasonable."

"I!"

"Try only to interest once more your generous friend in your sad fate. The devil! Tell her right out the truth; not as you have already said, that you are the dupe, but that you are the forger himself."

"No, never will I make such an acknowledgment; it would be shame without any advantage."

"Do you prefer that she should learn it to-morrow by the 'Police Gazette.'"

"I have three hours left—I can fly."

"Where will you go without money? Judge now! on the contrary, this last forgery taken up, you will find yourself in a superb position; you would have no more debts. Come, come, promise me to speak once more to the duchess. You are such a rake, you know how to make yourself so interesting in spite of your faults; at the very worst, perhaps, you will be esteemed the less, or even no more, but you will be lifted out of this scrape. Come, promise me to see your friend, and I will run to Petit Jean, and do my best to obtain an hour or two more."

"Hell! must I drink of shame to the very dregs!"

"Come, now! good luck—be tender, charming, fond; I run to Petit Jean: you will find me here until three o'clock: later it will no longer be in time: the public prosecutor's office is closed after four o'clock."

Badinot took his departure.

When the door was closed, Florestan was heard to cry, in profound despair, "Lost!"

During this conversation, which unmasked to the count the infamy of his son, and to Madam de Lucenay the infamy of the man whom she had so blindly loved, both remained immovable, scarcely breathing, under the weight of this frightful revelation.

It would be impossible to describe the mute eloquence of the sorrowful scene which passed between this young woman and the count, when there was no longer any doubt of the crime of Florestan. Extending his arm towards the room where his son remained, the old man smiled with bitter irony, cast a withering look on Madam de Lucenay, and seemed to say to her,

"Behold him for whom you have braved all shame, made every sacrifice! behold him you have reproached me for abandoning!"

The duchess understood the look: for a moment she hung her head under the weight of her shame. The lesson was terrible.

Then, by degrees, to the cruel anxiety which

had contracted the features of Madam de Lucenay, succeeded a kind of noble indignation. The inexcusable faults of this woman were at least palliated by the fidelity of her love, by the boldness of her devotion, by the grandeur of her generosity, by the frankness of her character, and by her inexorable aversion for everything that was cowardly and dishonest.

Still too young, too handsome, too much sought after, to experience the humility of having been made use of, this proud and decided woman, once the illusion of love having vanished, felt neither hatred nor anger; instantaneously, without any transition, a mortal disgust, an icy disdain, killed her affection, until then so lively; it was no longer a woman deceived by her lover, but it was the lady of fashion discovering that a man of her society was a cheat and a forger.

In supposing even that some circumstances might have extenuated the ignominy of Florestan, Madam de Lucenay would not have admitted them; according to her views, the man who overstepped certain limits of honour, either through vice or weakness, no longer existed in her eyes, honour being for her a question of existence or non-existence. The only sorrowful feeling experienced by the duchess was excited by the terrible effect which this unexpected revelation produced on the count, her old friend. For some moments he appeared not to see nor hear; his eyes were fixed, his head hung down, his arms suspended, his paleness livid, and from time to time a convulsive sigh escaped from his bosom. With a man as resolute as he was energetic, such a state of dejection was more alarming than the most furious bursts of rage.

Madam de Lucenay looked at him with much anxiety. "Courage, my friend," said she to him, in a low tone: "for you, for me, for this man—I know what remains for me to do."

The old man looked at her fixedly; then, as if he had been aroused from his stupor by some violent shock, he raised his head, his features assumed a threatening appearance, and, forgetting that his son might hear him, he cried,

"And I, also, for you, for me, for this man—I know what I have to do."

"Who is there?" cried Florestan, surprised.

Madam de Lucenay, fearing to meet the viscount, disappeared through the small door, and descended the private staircase.

Florestan, having again demanded who was there, and receiving no answer, entered the saloon.

The long beard of the old man changed him so much, he was so poorly dressed, that his son, who had not seen him for many years, did not at first recognise him; he advanced rapidly towards him with a menacing air, and said, "Who are you? What do you want here?"

"I am the husband of that woman!" answered the count, showing the portrait of Madam de Saint Rémy.

"My father!" cried Florestan, retreating in alarm; and he endeavoured to recall to mind the features so long forgotten. Erect, formidable, his looks irritated, his face purple with rage, his white hair thrown back, his arms crossed on his breast, the count, overawed, confounded his son, who, with his head down, dared not to raise his eyes upon him. Yet Saint Rémy, from some secret motive, made a violent effort to remain calm and to conceal his feelings of resentment.

"Father!" said Florestan, in a faltering voice, "you were there?"

"I was there."

"You have heard"—

"All!

"Oh!" cried the viscount, mournfully, concealing his face in his hands.

There was a moment's pause. Florestan, at first as much astonished as vexed at the unexpected apparition of his father, soon began to think what he could make out of this incident. "All is not lost," said he to himself; "the presence of my father is a stroke of fate. He knows all; he will not have his name dishonoured; he is not rich, but he must have more than twenty-five thousand francs. Let us play close—address, emotion, and a little tenderness. I will let the duchess alone, and I am saved!"

Then, giving to his charming features an expression of mournful dejection, moistening his eyes with the tears of repentance, assuming his most thrilling tones, his most pathetic manner, he cried, joining his hands with a gesture of despair: "Oh, my father; I am very unhappy! after so many years—to see you again, and at such a moment? I must appear so culpable to you? But deign to listen to me, I entreat you—I supplicate you; permit me, not to justify myself, but to explain to you my conduct; will you, my father?"

Old Saint Rémy answered not a word; his features remained immovable; he seated himself, and, with his chin resting on the palm of his hand, looked at his son in silence.

If Florestan had known the thoughts which filled the mind of his father with hatred, fury, and vengeance, alarmed at the apparent calmness of the count, he would not have tried to dupe him.

But, ignorant of the suspicions attached to his birth, ignorant of the fault of his mother, Florestan doubted not the success of his trick, believing he had only to soften a father who, at once a misanthrope and very proud of his name, would be capable, rather than see his name dishonoured, to decide on any sacrifice.

"My father," he resumed, timidly, "permit me to try, not to exculpate myself, but to tell you how, from involuntary misleadings, I have reached, almost in spite of myself,

actions — infamous — I acknowledge." The viscount took the silence of his father for a tacit consent, and continued:

"When I had the misfortune to lose my mother—my poor mother, who loved me so well—I was not twenty. I found myself alone, without counsel, without protection. Master of a considerable fortune, accustomed to luxury from my childhood, I had made it a habit, a want. Ignorant of the difficulty of earning money, I lavished it without measure. Unfortunately—and I say unfortunately, because this ruined me—my expenses, foolish as they were, by their elegance were remarkable. By good taste I eclipsed people who were ten times richer than I was. This first success intoxicated me. I became a man of luxury as one becomes a warrior or a statesman; yes, I loved luxury, not from vulgar ostentation, but I loved it as the painter loves a picture, as the poet loves poetry; like every other artist, I was jealous of my work; and my work was my luxury. I sacrificed everything to its perfection. I wished it fine, grand, complete, splendidly harmonious in everything, from my stables to my table, from my dress to my house. I wished in everything to be a model of taste and elegance. As an artist, in fine, I was greedy of the applauses of the crowd, and of the admiration of people of fashion; this success, so rare, I obtained."

In speaking thus, the features of Florestan lost by degrees their hypocritical expression, his eyes shone with a kind of enthusiasm; he told the truth; he had been at first reduced by this rather uncommon manner of understanding luxury. He looked inquiringly at his father; he thought he appeared rather softened.

He resumed, with growing warmth, "Oracle and regulator of the fashions, my praise or censure made the law: I was quoted, copied, extolled, admired, and that by the best company in Paris, that is to say, Europe—the world. The women partook of the general infatuation; the most charming disputed for the pleasure of coming to some very select fêtes which I gave, and everywhere, and always, nothing was heard but of the incomparable elegance and exquisite taste of these fêtes, which the millionaires could neither equal nor eclipse; in fine, I was the Glass of Fashion. This word will tell you all, my father, if you understand it."

"I understand it, and I am sure that at the galleys you would invent some refined elegance in the manner of carrying your chain, that will become the fashion in the yard, and will be called à la Saint Rémy," said the old man, with bitter irony; then he added, "and Saint Rémy is my name!"

It caused Florestan to exercise much control over himself to conceal the wound caused by this sarcasm.

He continued in a more humble tone: "Alas! my father, it is not from pride that I recall the fact of this success; for, I repeat to you, this success ruined me. Sought after, envied, flattered, praised, not by interested parisites, but by people whose position much surpassed mine, and over whom I only had the advantage derived from elegance—which is to luxury what taste is to the arts—my head was turned; I did not calculate that my fortune must be spent in a few years; little did I heed it. Could I renounce this feverish, dazzling life, in which pleasures succeeded to pleasures, enjoyments to enjoyments, fêtes to fêtes, intoxications of all sorts to enchantments of all sorts? Oh! if you knew, my father, what it is to be everywhere noticed as the hero of the day; to hear the whisperings which announce your entrance into a saloon; to hear the women say—'It is he!—there he is!' Oh! if you knew"—

"I know," said the old man, interrupting his son, and without changing his position; "I know. Yes, the other day, in a public square, there was a crowd; suddenly I heard a noise, like that with which you are received when you go anywhere; then the looks of all, the women especially, were fixed on a very handsome young man, just as they are fixed on you, and they pointed him out, just as they do you, saying 'It is he!—there he is!' just exactly as they say of you."

"But this man, my father?"

"Was a forger they were placing in the pillory."

"Ah!" exclaimed Florestan, with suppressed rage; then feigning profound affliction, he added, "My father, have you no pity—what can I say to you now? I do not seek to deny my faults—I only wish to explain to you the fatal cause of them. Ah, well! yes, should you again overwhelm me with cruel sarcasms, I will try to go to the end of this confession—I will try to make you understand this feverish vanity which has ruined me, because then, perhaps, you will pity me. Yes, for one pities a fool—and I was a fool. Shutting my eyes, I abandoned myself to the dazzling vortex, into which I dragged along with me the most charming women, the most amiable men. Stop myself—could I do it? As well say to the poet who exhausts himself, and whose genius is consuming his health, 'Pause in the midst of the inspiration which carries you away!' No, I could not: I—I! abdicate this royalty which I exercised, and returned, ruined, ashamed, mocked, to the state of a plebeian—unknown; give this triumph to my rivals, whom I had until then defied, ruled, crushed! No, no, I could not! not voluntarily, at least. The fatal day came, when for the first time, my money was wanting. I was as surprised, as if this moment never could happen. Yet I had still my horses, my carriages, and the furniture of this house. My debts paid, I should still have sixty thousand francs—perhaps—what should I do with this trifle? Then, my father, I took the first step in infamy. I was still honest.

I had only spent what belonged to me: but then I began to contract debts which I could not pay. I sold all I possessed to two of my people, in order to settle with them, and to be able, for six months longer, to enjoy this luxury which intoxicated me, in spite of my creditors. To provide for my wants at play and foolish expenses, I borrowed, in the first place, from the Jews; then, to pay the Jews, from my friends. These resources exhausted, commenced a new era in my life. From an honest man I had become a chevalier d'industrie, but I was not yet criminal. However, I hesitated. I wished to take a violent resolution. I had proved in several duels that I was not afraid of death. I thought I would kill myself!"

"Indeed?" said the count, ironically.

"You do not believe me, my father?"

"It was too soon, or too late!" added the old man, quite immovable, and in the same attitude.

Florestan, thinking he had alarmed his father in speaking to him of his project of suicide, thought it necessary to get up the scene again for a little stage effect. He opened a closet and took from it a little green crystal phial, and said to the count, placing it on the mantel-piece: "An Italian quack sold me this poison."

"And—it was for yourself?" said the old man, still leaning on his elbow.

Florestan understood the bearing of his father's words. His face now expressed real indignation, for he spoke the truth. One day, he had had the idea of killing himself—an ephemeral fantasy; people of his stamp are too cowardly to resolve coldly and without witnesses upon death, which they will boldly meet in a duel through a point of honour. He cried, then, in a tone of truth, "I have fallen very low, but at least not so low as that, my father! It was for myself I reserved the poison!"

"And you were afraid?" said the count without change of position.

"I confess it, I recoiled before this dreadful extremity; nothing was yet desperate; the persons whom I owed were rich, and could wait. At my age, with my relations, I hoped for a moment, if not to repair my fortune, at least to assure myself an honourable independent position in its place. Several of my friends, perhaps less capable than myself, had made rapid strides in diplomacy. I had a velleity of ambition. I had only to request, and I was attached to the legation of Gerolstein. Unfortunately, some days after this nomination, a gambling debt contracted with a man I hated, placed me in the most cruel embarrassment. I had exhausted every resource. A fatal idea occurred to me. Believing myself certain of impunity, I committed an infamous action. You see, my father, I conceal nothing from you. I confess the ignominy of my conduct. I seek to extenuate nothing. One of two resolutions remain for me to take, and I have now to decide which. The first is to kill myself, and to leave your name dishonoured, for if I do not pay to-day even the twenty-five thousand francs, the complaint is made, the affair known, and, dead or living, I am ruined. The second means is to throw myself in the arms of my father, to say to you, save your son, save your name from infamy, and I swear to leave to-morrow for Africa, to enlist as a soldier, and either to be killed or to return some day honourably reinstated. What I now tell you, my father, is true. In face of the extremity which overwhelms me, I have no other way. Decide; either I die covered with shame, or, thanks to you, I will live to repair my faults. These are not the threats and words of a young man, my father, I am now twenty-five; I bear your name; I have courage enough either to kill myself, or to become a soldier, for I will not go to the galleys."

The count arose.

"I will not have my name dishonoured," said he coldly to Florestan.

"Oh, my father! my saviour!" cried the viscount, warmly; and he was about to throw himself into the arms of his father, when he, with an icy gesture, checked the impulse.

"They wait for you until three o'clock, at the house of this man who has the forgery?"

"Yes, my father; and it is now two o'clock."

"Let us pass into your cabinet—give me something to write with."

"Here, my father."

The count seated himself before the desk of his son, and wrote with a firm hand:

"I engage to pay this night, at ten o'clock, the 25,000 francs which are owed by my son.

"COUNT DE SAINT RÉMY."

"Your creditor insists upon having the money; notwithstanding his threats, this engagement of mine will make him consent to a new delay; he can go to Mr. Dupont, banker, in the Rue de Richelieu, No. 7, who will inform him of the value of this note."

"Oh, father! however can"—

"You may expect me to-night; at ten o'clock. I will bring you the money. Let your creditor be here."

"Yes, father, and after to-morrow I start for Africa. You shall see if I am ungrateful. Then, perhaps, when I have reinstated myself, you will accept my thanks."

"You owe me nothing; I have said my name shall be no farther dishonoured, it shall not be," said M. de Saint Rémy, calmly; and taking his cane, which he had placed on the bureau, he turned towards the door.

"Father, your hand at least!" said Florestan, in a supplicating tone.

"Here, to-night, at ten o'clock," replied the count, refusing his hand. And he departed.

"Saved!" cried Florestan, joyfully, "saved!" then, after a moment's reflection, he added, "saved! almost. No matter; so far good.

Perhaps to-night I will acknowledge the other thing; he is in train; he will not stop halfway and let his sacrifice be useless, because he refuses a second. Yet why tell him? Who will know it? Never mind; if nothing is discovered, I will keep the money that he will give me to pay this last debt. I had a great deal of trouble to move him, this devil of a man! The bitterness of his sarcasms made me doubt my success; but my threat of suicide, the fear of having his name dishonoured, decided him; that was the lucky stroke. He is, doubtless, not so poor as he pretends to be, if he possesses a hundred thousand francs. He must have saved money, living as he does. Once more, I say his coming was a lucky chance. He has a cross look, but, at the bottom, I think he is a good fellow; but I must hasten to this bailiff."

He rang the bell. Boyer appeared.

"Why did you not inform me that my father was here? you are very negligent."

"Twice I endeavoured to speak to you when you came through the garden with M. Badinot; but, probably, pre-occupied by your conversation with M. Badinot, you made a motion with the hand not to be interrupted. I did not permit myself to insist. I should be deeply wounded if my lord could believe me guilty of negligence."

"Very well; tell Edward to harness immediately Orion—no—Plower, to the cabriolet."

Boyer bowed respectfully; as he was about to retire, some one knocked at the door.

"Come in!" said Florestan.

A second valet appeared, holding in his hand a small salver. Boyer took hold of the salver with a kind of jealous officiousness, and came and presented it to the viscount, who took from it a rather voluminous envelope, sealed with black wax. The valets retired ceremoniously. The viscount opened the package. It contained twenty-five thousand francs, in treasury notes, with no other information.

"Decidedly," cried he, with joy, "the day is lucky—sacred! this time, completely saved. I shall go to the jeweller's—and yet—perhaps—no, let us wait—they can have no suspicion of me—twenty-five thousand francs are good to keep; pardieu! I was a fool ever to doubt my star; at the moment it seems most obscured, does it not appear more brilliant than ever? But where does this money come from? the writing of the address is unknown to me; let me look at the seal—the cipher; yes, yes, I am not mistaken—an N. and an L.—it is Clotilde! How has she known?—and not a word—it is strange! How *àpropos!* Oh! I reflect—I made a rendezvous for this morning—these threats of Badinot upset me. I had forgotten Clotilde—after having waited some time, she has gone. Doubtless, this is sent as a delicate hint that she fears I shall forget her on account of my monetary embarrassments. Yes, it is an indirect reproach for not addressing myself to her as usual. Good Clotilde—always the same!—generous as a queen! What a pity to come again from her—still so handsome! Sometimes I regret it; but I have never asked her until, at the last extremity, I have been forced to it."

"The cabriolet is ready," said Boyer.

"Who brought this letter?"

"I am uninformed, my lord."

"Exactly—I will ask at the door; but tell me, is there no one below?" added the viscount, looking at Boyer in a significant manner.

"There is no longer any one, my lord."

"I was not deceived," thought Florestan. "Clotilde has waited for me, and has gone away."

"Will my lord have the goodness to grant me two minutes?" said Boyer.

"Speak, but make haste."

"Mr. Patterson and I have understood that his Grace the Duke of Montbrison was about to establish himself; if your lordship would have the goodness to propose to let him have his house all furnished, as well as the stables, it would be a good occasion for us to dispose of all; and, perhaps, might also suit my lord."

"You are right, Boyer; I should much prefer it. I will see Montbrison, and will speak to him about it. What are your conditions?"

"Your lordship understands that we ought to try to profit as much as we can by his generosity."

"And gain by your bargain? nothing can be plainer! Come, what is the price?"

"For the whole, two hundred and sixty thousand francs, my lord."

"How much do you and Patterson make?"

"About forty thousand francs, my lord."

"Very pretty! However, so much the better; for, after all, I am satisfied with you, and if I had had a will to make, I should have left this sum to you and Patterson." The viscount went out to go, in the first place, to his creditor and Madam de Lucenay, whom he did not suspect of having overheard his conversation with Badinot.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE INTERVIEW.

LUCENAY HOUSE was one of those princely habitations of the Faubourg Saint Germain which the unobstructed view renders so magnificent. A modern house could have been placed with ease in the space occupied by the staircase of one of these palaces; and an entire ward on the ground they covered.

Towards nine o'clock in the evening of this same day, the enormous gateway was opened to a glittering carriage, which, after having described a scientific curve in the immense court, stopped before a covered porch which led to an ante-chamber.

While the stampings of the two vigorous and mettlesome horses resounded on the pavement, a gigantic footman opened the emblazoned door, and a young man descended slowly from this brilliant vehicle, and not less slowly mounted the five or six steps of the porch.

This was the Viscount de Saint Rémy.

On leaving his creditor, who, satisfied with the engagement made by the Count de Saint Rémy, had granted the delay asked, and agreed to Come to Rue Chaillot at ten o'clock, Florestan was come to thank Madam de Lucenay for the new service she had rendered him; but, not having met the duchess in the morning, he came in great spirits, certain to find her at the hour she habitually reserved for him.

From the obsequiousness of the two footmen in the antechamber who ran to open the door as soon as they recognised the carriage; from the profoundly respectful air with which the rest of the liveried servants spontaneously arose as the viscount passed, one could easily see that he was looked upon as the second, if not the real master of the mansion.

When the Duke de Lucenay entered his house, his umbrella in his hand, and his feet in huge overshoes (he detested riding in the daytime), the same domestic evolutions were repeated, and always respectfully; yet, to the eyes of an observer, there was a great difference of expression between the reception given to the husband, and that which was reserved for the *cicisbeo*.

The same respectful eagerness was manifested in the saloon of the valets when Florestan entered there; in a moment, one of them preceded him, to announce him to Madam de Lucenay.

Never had Florestan been more conceited; never did he feel more easy, more sure of himself, more irresistible. The victory which he had gained in the morning over his father; the new proof of attachment from Madam de Lucenay; the joy at having so miraculously escaped from so cruel a position; his renewed confidence in his star, gave to his handsome face an expression of boldness and good-humour, which rendered him still more seducing. In fine, he never was more pleased with himself; and he had reason.

A last glance in a mirror completed the excellent opinion that Florestan had of himself.

The valet opened the folding doors of the saloon, and announced, "His lordship the Viscount de Saint Rémy."

The astonishment and indignation of the duchess were indescribable. She thought the count must have told his son that she also had overheard all.

We have said before, that, on learning the infamy of Florestan, the love of Madam de Lucenay was at once changed into utter disdain.

Being engaged out that evening, she was, although without diamonds, dressed with her usual taste and magnificence: this splendid toilet; the rouge which she wore boldly; her beauty, quite striking at night; her figure of "the goddess sailing on clouds," rendered still more striking a dignity, which no one possessed more than she did, and which she pushed, when it was necessary, to a most superlative haughtiness.

The proud, determined character of the duchess is known to the reader; let him imagine her look, when the viscount, smiling, advanced towards her, and said in loving tones, "My dear Clotilde, how kind you are! how much you"— The viscount could not finish.

The duchess was seated, and had not stirred; but her actions, the glance of her eye, revealed a contempt at once so calm and so withering, that Florestan stopped short.

He could not say a word, or make a step in advance.

Never had Madam de Lucenay conducted herself thus towards him. He could not believe it to be the same woman whom he had always found so tender and affectionate. His first surprise over, Florestan was ashamed of his weakness: he resumed his habitual audacity; making a step towards Madam de Lucenay to take her hand, he said to her in the most caressing manner, "Clotilde, how is this? I have never seen you so handsome, and yet"—

"Oh! this is too impudent!" cried the duchess, recoiling with such unequivocal disgust and pride, that Florestan once more was surprised and confounded.

However, assuming a little assurance, he said to her: "You will inform me, at least, Clotilde, the cause of this sudden change? What have I done? What do you wish?"

Without replying to him, Madam de Lucenay looked at him from head to foot, with an expression so insulting that Florestan felt the flush of resentment mount to his forehead, and he cried, "I know, madam, you are habitually very hasty in your ruptures. Is it a rupture you wish?"

"The pretension is curious!" said Madam de Lucenay, with a burst of sardonic laughter. "Know that when a lackey robs me—I do not break with him—I turn him out."

"Madam!"

"Let us put a stop to this," said the duchess, in a decided and haughty tone. "Your presence is repugnant to me! What do you want here? Have you not got your money?"

"I was right then. I guessed it was you. These twenty-five thousand francs"—

"Your last forgery is withdrawn, is it not? The honour of your family name is saved. It is well. Go away. Ah! believe—I much regret this money—it would have succoured so many honest people; but it was necessary to think of your father's shame and of mine."

"Then Clotilde, you know all! Oh! look

you now; nothing remains for me but to die," cried Florestan in the most pathetic and despairing tone.

A burst of indignant laughter from the duchess, replied to this tragical exclamation, and she added, between two fits of hilarity, "I never could have thought that infamy could make itself so ridiculous!"

"Madam!" cried Florestan, almost blind with rage.

The folding doors were thrown open suddenly, and a valet announced, "His Grace the Duke de Montbrison!"

Notwithstanding his habitual self-command Florestan could hardly restrain himself, which a man more accustomed to society than the duke would certainly have remarked.

Montbrison was scarcely eighteen.

Let the reader imagine the charming face of a young girl, fair, white, and red, whose rosy lips and smooth chin shall be slightly shaded with an incipient beard; add to this, large brown eyes, still slightly timid, a figure as graceful as that of the duchess, and he will have, perhaps, an idea of the appearance of this young duke, the most ideal Cherubino that a Countess and a Susanna had ever put on a woman's cap, after admiring the whiteness of his ivory neck.

The viscount had the weakness or the audacity to remain.

"How kind you are, Conrad, to have thought of me to-night!" said Madam de Lucenay in the most affectionate tone, extending her beautiful hand to the young duke, who hastened to shake hands with his cousin; but Clotilde shrugged her shoulders, and said to him gaily, "You may kiss them, cousin; you wear your gloves."

"Pardon me, cousin," said the youth; and he pressed his lips on the charming hand she presented him.

"What are you going to do this evening, Conrad?" demanded the duchess, without taking the least notice of Florestan.

"Nothing, cousin; when I leave here, I am going to my club."

"Not at all: you shall accompany M. de Lucenay and me, to Madam de Senneval's; it is her night; she has already asked me several times to present you."

"Cousin, I shall be too happy to place myself under your orders."

"And besides, frankly, I do not like to see you so soon accustom yourself to this taste for clubs; you have every requisite to be perfectly well received and even sought after in society. So you must go oftener."

"Yes, cousin."

"And as I am with you pretty much on the footing of a grandmother, my dear Conrad, I am disposed to be very maternal. You are emancipated, it is true; but still I think you will have need for a long time of a tutor. And you must absolutely accept of me."

"With joy, with delight, my cousin!" said the young duke with vivacity.

It is impossible to describe the mute rage of Florestan, who remained standing, leaning against the chimney-piece.

Neither the duke nor Clotilde paid any attention to him. Knowing how quickly Madam de Lucenay decided on anything, he imagined that she pushed her audacity and contempt so far that she wished to play the coquette openly and before him with the young duke.

It was not so; the duchess felt for her young cousin an affection quite maternal. But the young duke was so handsome, he seemed so happy at the gracious reception of his young cousin, that Florestan was exasperated by jealousy, or rather by pride; his heart writhed under the cruel stings of envy, inspired by Conrad de Montbrison, who, rich and charming, entered so splendidly this life of pleasures, which he was leaving—he, ruined, despised, disgraced.

Saint Rémy was brave—with the bravery of the head, if we may so express it, which, through anger or vanity, causes one to face a duel; but vile and corrupted, he had not that courage of the heart which triumphs over evil propensities, or which, at least gives one the energy to to escape infamy by a voluntary death.

Furious at the sovereign contempt of the duchess, thinking he saw a successor in the young duke, Saint Rémy resolved to match the insolence of Clotilde, and, if it was necessary, to select a quarrel with Conrad. The duchess, irritated at the audacity of Florestan, did not look at him, and Montbrison, in his attraction towards his cousin, forgetting the usages of society, had neither bowed nor said a word to the viscount, whom he knew perfectly.

He advanced towards Conrad, whose back was turned towards him, touched his arm lightly, and said, in an ironical and dry tone, "Good evening, your grace; a thousand pardons for not having perceived you before."

Montbrison, feeling that he had been wanting in politeness, turned quickly, and said, cordially, "Sir, I am confused, truly, but I dare hope that my cousin, who has caused my want of attention, will be pleased to make my excuses, and"—

"Conrad!" said the duchess, incensed at the impudence of Florestan, who persisted in remaining and braving her; "Conrad, it is right; no excuses; it is not worth the trouble."

Montbrison, believing that his cousin reproached him in a playful manner for being too formal, said gaily to the viscount, who was white with rage, "I shall not insist, sir, since my cousin forbids. You see her tutelage commences."

"And this tutelage will not stop there, my dear sir, be quite assured. Thus, in this view of the case (which her grace the duchess will readily approve, I do not doubt), as

idea has just struck me to make you a proposition."

"Me, sir?" said Conrad, beginning to dislike the sneering tone of Florestan.

"You. I leave in some days for Gerolstein. I wish to dispose of my house, all furnished, and my stables; you also should make *an arrangement*." The viscount emphasised these last words, looking at Madam de Lucenay. "It would be very piquant, would it not, your grace?"

"I do not comprehend you, sir," said Montbrison, more and more astonished.

"I will tell you, Conrad, why you cannot accept the offer which has been made you," said Clotilde.

"And why cannot his grace accept my offer, madam?"

"My dear Conrad, that which is proposed to be sold to you is already sold to others. You comprehend? You would have the inconvenience of being robbed as on the highway."

Florestan bit his lips with rage. "Take care, madam," cried he.

"How! threats here?" said Conrad.

"Come now, Conrad, pay no attention," said Madam de Lucenay, eating a bonbon imperturbably. "A man of honour ought not, nor may not, commit himself with this gentleman. If he insists, I will tell you wherefore."

A terrible scene was perhaps about to take place, when the doors were again thrown open, and the Duke de Lucenay entered, and, according to custom, with much noise and disturbance.

"How, my dear! not ready?" said he to his wife. "Why, it is astonishing—surprising! Good evening, Saint Rémy; good evening, Conrad. Oh, you see before you the most despairing of men—that is to say, I cannot sleep; I cannot eat; I am stupified; I cannot get used to it. Poor d'Harville, what an event!" And M. de Lucenay, throwing himself backward on a sofa, threw his hat from him with a gesture of despair, and, crossing his left leg over the right knee, he took his foot in his hand, continuing to utter exclamations of grief.

The emotions of Conrad and Florestan had time to be subdued before M. de Lucenay, the least observing man in the world, had perceived anything.

Madam de Lucenay, not from embarrassment—she was not a woman to be untimely embarrassed—but the presence of Florestan was repugnant and insupportable, said to the duke, "When you are ready, we will go. I am to present Conrad to Madam de Sennéval."

"No!" said the duke; and, throwing down a cushion, he arose quickly, and began to walk about, violently gesticulating. "I cannot help but think of poor d'Harville; can you, Saint Rémy?"

"Truly, a frightful event!" said the viscount, who, with hatred and rage in his heart, sought the looks of Montbrison; but he, after the last words of his cousin, not from want of courage, but from pride, turned away from a man so terribly debased.

"Pray, my lord," said the duchess to her husband, "do not regret M. d'Harville in a manner so noisy, and, above all, so singularly. Ring, if you please, for my servants."

"Only to think," said M. de Lucenay, seizing hold of the bell-pull, "three days ago he was full of life, and now, what remains of him? Nothing, nothing, nothing!" These last three exclamations were accompanied by three pulls of the bell so violent that the cord broke which he held in his hand, separated from the upper spring, and fell upon a candelabra filled with waxlights, and overturned two; one fell upon the mantelpiece, and broke a beautiful little vase of Sèvres china; the other rolled on the ground, and set fire to a rug of ermine, which, for a moment in a blaze, was almost immediately extinguished by Conrad.

At the same moment, two valets, summoned by the loud ringing, arrived in haste, and found M. de Lucenay with the bell-rope in his hand, the duchess laughing violently at this ridiculous cascade of candles, and Montbrison partaking the hilarity of his cousin.

Saint Rémy alone did not laugh.

Lucenay, quite habituated to such accidents, preserved a serious countenance; he threw the rope to one of the servants, and said, "The coach!"

When he became a little more calm, the duchess said, "Really, sir, there is no one else in the world but yourself who could have caused a laugh at so lamentable an event."

"Lamentable! you may well say frightful! horrible! Now, only see, since yesterday I have been thinking how many persons there are, even in my own family, whom I would rather should have died than poor d'Harville. My nephew Emberval, for instance, who is so tiresome with his stammering; or your aunt Merinville, who is always talking of her nerves, her blues, and who swallows every day, while waiting for her dinner, an abominable potpie, just like a bricklayer's wife! Do you think much of your aunt Merinville?"

"Hush! your grace is crazy!" said the duchess, shrugging her shoulders."

"But it is true," answered the duke; "one would give a hundred indifferent persons for a friend. Is it not so, Saint Rémy?"

"Doubtless."

"It is always that old story of the tailor. Do you know, Conrad, the story of the tailor?"

"No, cousin."

"You will understand at once the allegory. A tailor was condemned to be hung; there was no other tailor in the village; what do the inhabitants do? They said to the judge, 'Your honour, we have only one tailor, and

we have three shoemakers; if it is all the same to you to hang one of the shoemakers in the place of the tailor, we shall have quite enough with two shoemakers.' Do you comprehend the allegory, Conrad?"

"Yes, cousin."

"And you, Saint Rémy?"

"I also."

"The coach," said one of the servants.

"Oh! but why do you not wear your diamonds?" said M. de Lucenay, unexpectedly; "with this dress they would look devilish well."

Saint Rémy shuddered.

"For one poor little time that we go out together," continued the duke, "you might have honoured me with your diamonds. They are really very handsome. Have you ever seen them, Saint Rémy?"

"Yes; his lordship knows them by heart," said Clotilde. "Give me your arm, Conrad."

Lucenay followed the duchess with Saint Rémy, who was almost beside himself with rage.

"Are you not coming with us to the Senneval's?" said Lucenay to him.

"No, impossible," answered he, hastily.

"By the way, Saint Rémy, Madam de Senneval is another one—what do I say, one? —two—whom I would sacrifice willingly; for her husband is also on my list."

"What list?"

"Of those persons whom I would willingly see die, if poor d'Harville could have remained."

While Montbrison was assisting his cousin with her mantle, Lucenay said to him, "Since you are going with us, Conrad, order your carriage to follow ours, unless you will go, Saint Rémy; then you can give me a place, and I will tell you a story worth two of the tailor's."

"I thank you," said Florestan, drily; "I cannot accompany you."

"Then, good-bye. Have you had a dispute with my wife? See, she is getting into the carriage without speaking to you!"

"Cousin!" said Conrad, waiting through deference for the duke.

"Get in, get in," cried he; and stopping for a moment in the porch, he admired the viscount's equipage.

"Are these your sorrels, Saint Rémy?"

"Yes."

"And your fat driver—what a figure! Just see how he holds his horses in his hands! I must confess, there is no one but a Saint Rémy who has the best of everything."

"Madam de Lucenay and her cousin are waiting," said Florestan, with bitterness.

"It is true; how rude I am! Soon again, Saint Rémy. Oh, I forgot; if you have nothing better to do, come and dine with us to-morrow. Lord Dudley has sent me from Scotland some grouse and heathcocks. Just imagine something monstrous. It is agreed, is it not?"

The duke joined his wife and Conrad.

Saint Rémy remained alone, and saw the carriage depart; his own drew up, and as he took his seat he cast a look of rage, hatred, and despair on this house, where he had so often entered as a master, and which he now left, ignominiously driven away

"Home," said he, roughly.

"To the hotel," said the footman to Patterson, shutting the door.

The bitter and sorrowful thoughts of Florestan on his way home can easily be imagined As he entered, Boyer, who was waiting for him at the lodge, said, "My lord, the count is up-stairs."

"It is well."

"There is also a man there, to whom the count has given an appointment at ten o'clock."

"Well, well. Oh, what a day!" said Florestan, as he was going up-stairs to meet his father, whom he found in the saloon where the morning's interview had taken place. "A thousand pardons, father, for not being here when you arrived; but I"—

"The man who holds this forged draft is here?"

"Yes, father, below.

"Send for him to come up."

Florestan rang the bell; Boyer answered.

"Tell M. Petit Jean to come here."

"Yes, my lord;" and Boyer disappeared.

"How kind you are, father, to remember your promise?"

"I always remember what I promise."

"How grateful! How can I ever prove"—

"I will not have my name dishonoured; it shall not be."

"It shall not be; no; and it shall never be more, I swear to you, father."

The count looked at his son in a singular manner, and repeated, "No, it shall never be more!" Then, with a sneering laugh, he added, "You are a conjuror!"

"I read my resolution in my heart."

The count made no reply, but walked up and down the room with his hands in the large pockets of his overcoat.

"M. Petit Jean," said Boyer, introducing a man with a low and cunning expression of face.

"Where is that bill?" said the count.

"Here it is, sir," said Petit Jean (a man of straw of Jacques Ferrand), presenting it.

"Is that it?" said the count to his son.

"Yes, father."

The count drew from the pocket of his waistcoat twenty-five notes of one thousand francs each, handed them to his son, and said, "Pay!"

Florestan paid, and took the draft with a profound sigh of satisfaction.

M. Petit Jean placed the bills carefully in an old pocket-book, and retired. Saint Rémy went with him out of the room, while Florestan prudently tore up the note.

"At least the twenty-five thousand francs

from Clotilde remain. If nothing is discovered, it is a consolation. But how she has treated me! Now, what can my father have to say to Petit Jean?"

The noise of a key turned in a lock made the viscount shudder. His father re-entered; his pallor had increased.

"I thought I heard some one lock the door of my cabinet, father?"

"Yes, I locked it."

"You, father!" cried Florestan, surprised.

The count placed himself so that his son could not descend the private stairs which led to out-doors.

Florestan, alarmed, began to remark the sinister look of his father, and followed all his movements with anxiety. Without being able to explain it, he felt alarmed. "Father, what is the matter?"

"This morning, on seeing me, your sole thought has been this: Father will not have his name dishonoured; he will pay, if I can manage to make him believe in my assumed repentance."

"Oh! can you think that"—

"Do not interrupt me. I have been your dupe; you have neither shame, nor regret, nor remorse: you are rotten to the heart; you have never had an honest sentiment; you have not robbed as long as you had enough to satisfy your caprices; that is what is called probity by rich people of your stamp; then followed want of decency, then baseness, crime, forgery. This is only the first period of your life—it is beautiful and pure compared to that which awaits you."

"If I did not change my conduct, I acknowledge; but I will change, father. I have sworn it to you."

"You would not change."

"But"—

"You could not change! Driven from the society to which you have been accustomed, you would soon become criminal, like the wretches with whom you would associate; a robber inevitably, and, if necessary, an assassin. There is your future life."

"I an assassin!"

"Yes, because you are a coward!"

"I have fought duels, and I have proved"—

"I tell you you are a coward! You have preferred infamy to death! A day will come when you will prefer the impunity of your new crimes to the life of others. That cannot be; I arrive in time to save, henceforth, at least, my name from public dishonour. It must be finished."

"How, father, finished! what do you mean to say?" cried Florestan, more and more alarmed at the expression of his father and his increasing paleness.

Suddenly some one knocked violently at the door of the cabinet, Florestan made a movement, as if to open it, but his father seized him with an iron hand, and withheld him.

"Who knocks?" demanded the former.

"In the name of the law, open, open!" said a voice.

"This forgery was not, then, the last?" said the count, in a low voice, looking at his son with a terrible scowl.

"Yes, father, I swear it," answered Florestan, trying in vain to release himself from the hold.

"In the name of the law, open!" repeated the voice.

"What do you want?" demanded the count.

"I am an officer of police; I come to make a search on account of a robbery of diamonds, of which M. de Saint Rémy is accused. M. Baudoin, jeweller, has the proofs. If you do not open, sir, I shall be obliged to break in the door."

"A robber already! I was not deceived," said the count, in a low tone. "I came to kill you—I have delayed too long."

"To kill me!"

"My name is enough dishonoured! let us finish: I have two pistols here—you are going to blow out your brains, otherwise I will do it for you, and I will say you killed yourself to escape shame."

And the count, with frightful *sang-froid*, drew from his pocket a pistol, and with his disengaged hand gave it to his son, saying,

"Come, proceed, if you are not a coward,"

After new and fruitless efforts to escape from the hands of the count, his son fell backward, overcome with fright and pale with horror. From the terrible and inexorable looks of his father, he saw there was no pity to expect from him.

"Father!" he cried.

"You must die!"

"I repent!"

"It is too late! Do you hear? they will break down the door!"

"I will expiate my faults!"

"They are going to enter! Must I, then, kill you?"

"Pardon!"

"The door will give way! You will have it so." And the count placed the pistol against the breast of his son.

The viscount saw that he was lost. He took a sudden and desperate resolution; no longer struggling with his father, he said, with firmness and resignation, "You are right, my father; give me this pistol. There is infamy enough attached to my name; the life that awaits me is frightful, it is not worth contending for. Give me the pistol. You shall see if I am a coward." And he extended his hand. "But, at least, a word, one single word of consolation, of pity, of farewell," said Florestan. His trembling lips and ashy paleness evinced the emotion of his trying situation.

"If this should be my son!" thought the count, hesitating to give him the instrument, "if this is my son I ought still less to hesitate at this sacrifice." The door of the

cabinet was broken in with a tremendous crash.

"Father—they come—oh! I feel now that death is a benefaction. Thanks, thanks! but at least your hand, and pardon me!"

Notwithstanding his firmness, the count could not prevent a shudder, and said, in a broken voice, "I pardon you."

"Father, the door opens; go to them; do not let them suspect you, at least. And then, if they enter here, they will prevent me from finishing. Adieu."

The footsteps of several persons were heard in the adjoining apartment.

Florestan pointed the pistol to his heart.

It was discharged at the moment when the count, to escape this horrible scene, had turned away, and rushed out of the room, the curtains closing after him.

At the noise of the explosion, at the sight of the count, pale and trembling, the commissary stopped suddenly at the threshold of the door, making a sign for his officers not to advance.

Informed by Badinot that the viscount was closeted with his father, the magistrate at once comprehended everything, and respected his great sorrow.

"Dead," cried the count, concealing his face in his hands; "dead!" repeated he, overwhelmed. "It was right—better death than infamy, but it is frightful!"

"My lord," said the magistrate, sadly, after a few moments' silence, "spare yourself a sorrowful spectacle; leave this house. Now there remains for me a duty to perform, still more painful than that which brought me here."

"You are right, sir," said Saint Rémy. "As to the victim of the robbery, you can tell him to call at M. Dupont's, banker."

"Rue du Richelieu. He is well known," answered the magistrate.

"At what amount are the stolen diamonds estimated?"

"At about thirty thousand francs, my lord; the person who bought them, through whom the robbery was discovered, gave that amount for them to your son."

"I can yet pay this, sir. Let the jeweller call the day after to-morrow on my banker; I will settle with him."

The commissary bowed, and the count departed. As soon as he was gone, the magistrate, profoundly touched at this unexpected scene, turned towards the saloon, the curtains of which were down. He raised them with emotion.

"Nobody!" cried he, astonished, looking round the room, and not seeing the least trace of the tragic event which was supposed to have occurred.

Then, remarking the small door in the tapestry, he ran thither. It was locked on the other side. "A trick," cried he, in a rage; "he has undoubtedly made his escape in this way."

And, in fact, the viscount, before his father, pointed the pistol at his heart, but he had afterwards very dexterously discharged it under his arm, and immediately fled.

Notwithstanding the most active researches in all parts of the house, he was not to be found.

During the conversation between his father and the commissary, he had rapidly gained the boudoir, thence the conservatory, the back street, and finally the Champs Elysées.

CHAPTER XXXII.

GOOD-BYE IN PRISON.

THE morning after these last-mentioned events, a touching scene took place in Saint Lazare, at the hour of the recreation of the prisoners.

On this day, during the promenade of her companions, Fleur de Marie was seated on a bench near the basin, already called hers. By a sort of tacit agreement, the prisoners abandoned this place, which she loved, for the sweet influence of the girl had much increased. Goualeuse preferred this seat near the fountain, because the moss which grew around the border of the reservoir recalled to her mind the verdure of the fields, and even the limpid water with which it was filled made her think of the little river of Bouqueval village.

To the sad gaze of a prisoner, a tuft of grass is a meadow, a flower is a garden.

Confiding in the kind promise of Madam d'Harville, Fleur de Marie had been expecting for two days to leave Saint Lazare. Although she had no reason for inquietude at the delay, she, from her habitual misfortunes, hardly dared to hope soon for freedom.

Naturally, from the expectation of so soon seeing her friends at Bouqueval and Rudolph, Fleur de Marie should have been transported with joy.

It was not so. Her heart beat sadly; her thoughts returned without ceasing to the words, and lofty looks of Madam d'Harville, when the poor prisoner had spoken with so much enthusiasm of her benefactor.

With singular intuition, Goualeuse had thus discovered a part of the lady's secret.

"The warmth of my gratitude for M. Rudolph has wounded this young lady, so handsome and of a rank so elevated," thought Fleur de Marie. "Now I comprehend the bitterness of her words! she expresses disdainful jealousy! She, jealous of me! then she loves him, and I love him, also? My love must have betrayed itself in spite of me! To love him—I—a creature for ever ruined! ungrateful, and wretch that I am! Oh! if that were so, rather death a hundred times."

Let us hasten to say, the unhappy child, who seemed doomed to every kind of martyrdom, exaggerated what she called her love. To her profound gratitude towards Rudolph

was joined an involuntary admiration of the grace, strength, and beauty which distinguished him above all; nothing less material, nothing more pure than this admiration, but it existed lively and powerful, because physical beauty is always attractive.

And then, besides, the voice of blood, so often denied, mute, unknown, or disowned, sometimes makes itself heard; these bursts of passionate tenderness, which drew Fleur de Marie towards Rudolph, and alarmed her because in her ignorance she misconstrued their tendency, resulted from mysterious sympathies as evident, but also as inexplicable as the resemblance of features. In a word, Fleur de Marie, learning that she was Rudolph's daughter, could have at once accounted for her feelings towards him; then, completely enlightened, she could admire without any scruple the beauty of her father.

Thus is explained the dejectedness of Fleur de Marie, although she expected at any moment to leave Saint Lazare.

Fleur de Marie, melancholy and pensive, was then seated on a bench near the basin, regarding with a kind of mechanical interest the gambols of two daring birds that came to sport on the kerb-stone. She ceased for a moment to work on a little child's frock which she was hemming. It is necessary to say that this belonged to the generous offering made to Mont Saint Jean by the prisoners, thanks to the touching intervention of Fleur de Marie.

The poor, deformed *protégée* of La Goualeuse was seated at her feet; quite busy in making a little cap, from time to time she cast on her benefactress a look at once grateful, timid, and devoted—the look of a dog to his master.

The beauty, charms and adorable sweetness of Fleur de Marie, inspired this degraded woman with as much affection as respect.

There is always something holy and grand even in the aspirations of a heart debased, which, for the first time, opens itself to gratitude; and, until then, no one had caused Mont Saint Jean to experience the religious ardour of a sentiment so new to her. At the end of a few moments, Fleur de Marie shuddered slightly, wiped away a tear, and resumed her sewing.

"You will not then, take a little rest during the recreation, my angel?" said Mont Saint Jean to Goualeuse.

"As I have given no money to buy the lavette, I must finish my proportion in work," answered the girl.

"Your part! why, without you, instead of this fine white linen, and warm fustian, to clothe my child, I should only have had those rags which were trampled in the mud. I am very grateful towards my companions; they have been very kind to me, it is true; but you! oh, you! How then, shall I explain myself?" added the poor creature, hesitatingly, and very much embarrassed to express her thoughts. "Hold!" resumed she; "there is the sun, is it not? there is the sun!"

"Yes, Mont Saint Jean, I listen," answered Fleur de Marie, inclining her enchanting face towards the hideous visage of her companion.

"You will laugh at me," answered she, sadly; "I want to speak, and I don't know how."

"Say on, Mont Saint Jean."

"Have you not the eyes of an angel!" said the prisoner, looking at Fleur de Marie in a kind of ecstacy; "your beautiful eyes encourage me. Come, I will try to say what I wish. There is the sun, is it not? It is very warm, it makes our prison gay, it is pleasant to see and feel, is it not?"

"Without doubt."

"Well, let us suppose—this sun did not make itself, and if one is grateful to it, so much the more reason"—

"To be grateful towards Him who created it, you mean, Mont Saint Jean! You are right; hence, you should pray to Him, adore Him—it is God."

"That's it, there's my idea," cried the prisoner, joyfully; "that's it; I ought to be grateful to my companions, but I ought to pray to you, adore you, La Goualeuse, for it is you who have rendered them good to me, instead of being wicked as they were."

"But, if I am good, as you say, Mont Saint Jean, it is God who has made me so; it is, then, He whom you must thank."

"Ah! marry—perhaps so, then, since you say so," answered the prisoner; "if it pleases you to have it so, very well."

"Yes, my poor Mont Saint Jean, pray to Him often. This will be the best way of proving to me that you love me a little."

"Love you, La Goualeuse! But, do you not recollect what you told the others, to prevent them from beating me? 'It is not her alone you beat, it is also her child.' Well! for the same reason, I do not love you for myself alone, but also for my child."

"Thank you, thank you, Mont Saint Jean; you give me pleasure to hear you say that."

At this moment, Madam Armand, the inspectress, entered the court. After having sought for Fleur de Marie with her eyes, she came to her with a satisfied and smiling air. "Good news, my child!"

"What do you say, madam?" cried La Goualeuse, rising.

"Your friends have not forgotten you; they have obtained your liberty. The director has just received the notice."

"Can it be possible, madam! Oh! what happiness!" The emotion of Fleur de Marie was so violent, that she turned pale, put her hand to her heart, which beat violently, and fell back on her seat.

"Calm yourself, my child," said Madam Armand, kindly; "happily, such shocks are without danger."

"Ah, madam, how grateful I ought to be!"

"It is, doubtless, Madam d'Harville who has obtained your liberty. There is an old lady here who is charged to conduct you to your friends. Wait for me; I will return for you; I have a few words to say in the work-room." It would be difficult to describe the expression of deep grief which spread over the features of Mont Saint Jean on learning that her good angel was to leave Saint Lazare.

The grief of this woman was caused less by the fear of a renewal of her torments, than by the sorrow at parting from the sole being who had ever evinced any interest for her. Still seated at the foot of the bench, she took hold of the two tufts of tangled hair, which escaped from under her old black cap, as if to tear them out; then, this violent affliction giving way to dejection, she let her head fall, and remained dumb and immovable, with her face buried in her hands.

Notwithstanding her joy at leaving the prison, Fleur de Marie could not prevent a shudder at the remembrance of La Chouette and the Maître d'Ecole; recollecting that these two monsters had made her swear not to inform her benefactors of her sad fate.

But these sad thoughts were soon dispelled at the hope of seeing Bouqueval, Madam Georges, and Rudolph again; to the latter, she wished to recommend La Louve and Martial; it even seemed to her that the sentiment which she reproached herself for having felt towards her benefactor, being no longer nourished by sorrow and by solitude, would be calmed and modified as soon as she should resume the rustic occupations which she loved so much to partake with the good and honest inhabitants of the farm.

Astonished at the silence of her companion, of which she did not suspect the cause, she touched her slightly on the shoulder, and said, "Mont Saint Jean, since I am now free, can I be of any service to you?"

On feeling the hand of La Goualeuse, the prisoner shuddered, let her arms fall, and turned towards the young girl, her face streaming with tears.

"Listen to me, Mont Saint Jean," said Fleur de Marie, touched at the affection of this poor creature. "I can promise you nothing for yourself, although I know some very charitable people; but for your child, it is different; it is innocent of every evil; he, and the persons of whom I speak, would perhaps, take the charge of it when you can part with it."

"Part from it—never, oh, never!" cried Mont Saint Jean, with warmth. "What would become of me then, now that I have counted on him?"

"But how will you support it? son or daughter, it must be honest, and for that"—

"It must eat honest bread, is it not so, La Goualeuse? I think so; it is my ambition. I say it to myself every day, thus: on leaving here I shall not let the grass grow under my feet. I will become a rag-picker, a crossing-sweeper, but I'll be correct; one owes that, if not to one's self, at least to one's children, when one has the honour of having any," said she, with a kind of pride.

"And who will take care of your child while you work?" answered La Goualeuse; "would it not be better, if that is possible, as I hope it is, to place it in the country with some good people, who would make it a good farmer's girl or a ploughboy? You can come from time to time to see it, and some day, perhaps, you would find the means to remain altogether—in the country it costs so little to live."

"But to part with it, to part with it! All my joy is in it. I, who have no one to love me!"

"You must think more for it than for yourself, my poor Mont Saint Jean; in two or three days I will write to Madam Armand, and if the demand I mean to make in favour of your child succeeds, you will never have occasion to say again, what you said just now, 'Alas! what will become of it?'"

The inspectress, Madam Armand, interrupted this conversation; she came to seek Fleur de Marie.

After having again burst into sobs, and bathing with tears of despair the hands of the girl, Mont Saint Jean fell back on the bench quite overcome with sorrow, not even thinking of the promise just made to her by Fleur de Marie.

"Poor creature!" said Madam Armand, leaving the yard, followed by La Goualeuse; "poor creature, her gratitude towards you gives me a better opinion of her."

On learning that Fleur de Marie was pardoned, the other prisoners, instead of being jealous, expressed their joy; some of them surrounded her, and bade her farewell in a cordial manner, congratulating her frankly on her quick deliverance from prison.

"All the same," said one of them; "she has made us do some good; it was when we collected for Mont Saint Jean. This will be remembered in Saint Lazare."

When Fleur de Marie had left the prison buildings under the conduct of the inspectress, the latter said to her, "Now, my child, go to the wardrobe, where you will leave your prison garments, and resume the peasant's costume, which, from its rustic simplicity, becomes you so well; adieu. You go to be happy, for you go under the protection of worthy people, and you leave this house never to return. But—hold—I am not unreasonable," said Madam Armand, whose eyes were bathed in tears, "it is impossible for me to conceal from you how much I am already attached to you, poor child!" Then, seeing Fleur de Marie much affected, she added, "You do not wish me thus to sadden your departure?"

"Ah! madam, is it not to your recommendation that this young lady, to whom I owe my liberty, interested herself in my fate?"

"Yes, and I am happy at what I have done; my presentiments have not deceived me." At this moment a bell rang. "Ah! this is the signal for them to resume their work; I must go in. Adieu! once more adieu, my dear child!"

And Madam Armand, quite as much affected as Fleur de Marie, embraced her tenderly; she then said to one of the attendants, "Conduct her to the wardrobe."

A quarter of an hour afterward, Fleur de Marie, clothed as a peasant, entered the office where Mrs. Seraphin awaited her. This woman, housekeeper of Jacques Ferrand, came to take the unfortunate child to Ravageurs' Island.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

REMEMBRANCES.

JACQUES FERRAND had easily and promptly obtained the liberty of Fleur de Marie.

Instructed by La Chouette of the sojourn of La Goualeuse in Saint Lazare, he had immediately addressed himself to one of his clients, an influential man, telling him that a girl, led astray but sincerely repentant, and recently confined in Saint Lazare, ran the risk, from contact with the other prisoners, of having her good resolutions weakened. This girl had been strongly recommended to him by some respectable people, who would take charge of her as soon as she left the prison. Jacques Ferrand had added, he begged his all-powerful client, in the name of morality, of religion, and of the future rehabilitation of this unfortunate, to solicit her discharge. Finally, the notary, so as to completely conceal his part in the transaction, particularly requested his client not to name him in the accomplishment of this good work; this wish, attributed to the philanthropic modesty of Jacques Ferrand, was scrupulously observed; the release of Fleur de Marie was demanded and obtained solely in the name of the client, who, as soon as it was received, sent it to Jacques Ferrand, that he might address it to the protectors of the girl.

Mrs. Seraphin, on giving this order to the directors of the prison, added that she was charged to conduct La Goualeuse to her friends. From the excellent account given by the inspectress to Madam d'Harville, no one doubted that she owed her freedom to the intervention of the marchioness. Thus the notary's housekeeper could in no way excite the suspicions of her victim.

Mrs. Seraphin had, as occasion required, the air of a good soul; it required very close observation to remark something insidious, false and cruel in her crafty look, her hypocritical smile.

In spite of her profound wickedness, which had made her the accomplice or confidant of her master's crimes, Mrs. Seraphin could not help being struck with the touching beauty of this girl, delivered by herself when quite a child to La Chouette, whom she was then about to conduct to certain death.

"Well, my dear," said she, in honeyed tones, "you must be delighted to get out of prison."

"Oh! yes, ma'am; and, doubtless I owe my deliverance to the protection of Madam d'Harville, who has been so kind to me?"

"You are not mistaken. But come, we are rather late, and we have got a long road to travel."

"We are going to Bouqueval Farm, to Madam Georges, ma'am," cried La Goualeuse.

"Yes, certainly, we are going to the country—to Madam Georges," said the housekeeper, to drive away every suspicion from the mind of Fleur de Marie; then she added, with malicious good-nature, "But this is not all; before you see Madam Georges, a little surprise awaits you. Come, come, our hack is below. What delight you must feel at leaving this place, dear. Come, let us go. Your servant, sirs." And Mrs. Seraphin, after having exchanged salutations with the warders, descended with La Goualeuse, followed by an officer to open the doors. The last one was closed on the two females, and they found themselves under the large porch which faces the Rue du Faubourg Saint Denis, when they met a girl who was coming, doubtless, to visit a prisoner. It was Rigolette, ever neat and coquettish. A little plain cap, very clean, and trimmed with cherry-coloured ribbons, which harmonised wonderfully with her jet-black hair, surrounded her pretty face; a very white collar was turned over her long brown tartan. She carried on her arm a straw basket, and, thanks to her neat and graceful manner of walking, her thick-soled boots were of marvellous cleanliness, although she came, alas, very far.

"Rigolette!" cried Fleur de Marie, at once recognising her.

"La Goualeuse!" exclaimed the grisette in her turn. And the girls threw themselves into each other's arms. Nothing could be more enchanting than the contrast between these young creatures of sixteen, tenderly embracing, both so charming, and yet so different in expression and beauty. The one fair, with large, blue, melancholy eyes, and a profile of angelic pureness; the other a lively brunette, with round and rosy cheeks, pretty black eyes, a charming picture of youth and gaiety, a rare and touching example of happiness in indigence, of virtue in destitution, and of joy in industry.

When Fleur de Marie, dragged up, rather than brought up, had ran away from a hag known as Old One-eye, she had been arrested and committed to prison for eight years. Taught sewing there, she had saved up some three hundred francs. Ignorant, childishly fond of flowers and the open air of the country, she had made Rigolette's acquaintance, with hardly a deeper object than to have a

companion in her jaunts. Her money spent, Fleur de Marie had fallen in with the Ogress, the keeper of the Lapin Blanc Tavern, who had kept her for the sinful purposes which had blemished all her life.

After an exchange of their mutual caresses, the girls looked at each other. Rigolette was joyful at the encounter, Fleur de Marie confused.

The sight of her friend recalled to her mind the few days of calm enjoyment which had preceded her first degradation. "It is you—what happiness!" said the grisette.

"Goodness me! what a delightful surprise, it is so long since we have seen one another," answered La Goualeuse.

"Oh! now I am no longer astonished at not having met you for six months," remarked Rigolette, observing the rustic clothes of La Goualeuse; "you live in the country?"

"Yes, since some time," said Fleur de Marie, casting down her eyes.

"And you come, like me, to see some one in prison?"

"Yes—I came—I came to see some one," answered Fleur de Marie, stammering and blushing with shame.

"And you are returning home, far from Paris, without doubt. Dear little Goualeuse, always good, I recognise you there. Do you remember the poor woman to whom you gave your mattrass, linen, and the small amount of money you had, which we were about to spend in the country? for then you were crazy after the country, you little village girl."

"And you did not like it much, Rigolette. How kind you were, for it was on my account you went."

"And for mine also; for you, who were always a little serious, became so contented, gay, and lively, once in the midst of the fields or woods; if it were only to see you there, it was pleasure to me. But let me look at you again! How this little round cap becomes you! how pretty you look. Decidedly, it was your vocation to wear a peasant's cap, as it was mine to wear the grisette's. Now you are according to your wishes, you must be happy; it does not surprise me. When I did not see you any more, I said to my self, good little Goualeuse is not made for Paris; she is a real flower of the forest, as the song says, and these flowers cannot live in the capital; the air is not good enough for them. La Goualeuse has got a place with some good people in the country. This is what you have done, is it not?"

"Yes," said Fleur de Marie, blushing.

"Only I have a reproach to make you.'

"To me?"

"You should have advised me; one does not leave in this way, least, without sending some word."

"I—I left Paris so quick," said Fleur de Marie, more and more confused, "that I could not."

"Oh! I did not wish it; I am too happy to see you again. In truth, you did right to leave Paris, it is so difficult to live here quietly, without reckoning that a poor girl, isolated as we are, might turn to evil without wishing it. When one has nobody to advise with, one has so few means of defence; the men make such fine promises; and then, sometimes poverty is so hard. Do you remember little Julie, who was so pretty? and Rosine, the blonde with black eyes?"

"Yes, I recollect them."

"Well! my poor Goualeuse, they have both been deceived, then abandoned, and, finally, from misfortune to misfortune, they have fallen to be such wretched women as are shut up here."

"Oh!" cried Fleur de Marie, who held down her head and became purple with shame.

Rigolette, deceived in the sense of the exclamation of her friend, resumed: "Don't be as sad as me, don't cry!"

"You have sorrows?"

"I? Oh, you know me, a regular Roger Bontemps. I am not changed, but, unfortunately, everybody is not like me; and as others have their troubles, that causes me to have some."

"Always kind!"

"Now just imagine, I came here for a poor girl—a neighbour—a very lamb, who is accused wrongfully, and much to be pitied; she is Louise Morel, daughter of an honest workman who has become crazy from his misfortunes."

At the name of Louise Morel, one of the victims of the notary, Mrs. Seraphin shuddered and looked at Rigolette attentively. The face of the grisette was absolutely unknown to her; nevertheless, from that moment she paid great attention to the conversation.

"Poor thing," replied the songstress, "how happy she must be at your not forgetting her in her trouble."

"This is not all—it is a fatality, just as you met me, I came a great distance—and from another prison—a prison for men."

"You?"

"Oh! yes, I have there another very sad friend. You see my basket" (and she showed it) "is divided in two: each one has a side; to-day I bring Louise a little linen, and just now I carried something to poor Germain; my prisoner is called Germain. I cannot think of what has just passed between us without having a desire to weep; it is foolish—I know it is of no use, but indeed, it is my nature."

"And why do you feel like weeping?"

"Only think, Germain is so unfortunate as to be associated with all the prison rogues; it quite overcomes him; he has a taste for nothing, eats nothing, and is growing thinner every day. I saw that, and I said to myself, 'He is not hungry; I will make him a nice

little dainty bit, which he liked so much when he was my neighbour; that will give him an appetite.' When I say a dainty bit, just understand me, it was just some nice potatoes, mashed up with a little milk and sugar; I filled a pretty cup with it, and just now I took it to him in prison, telling him that I had prepared this myself, just as I used to do in our happy days—you understand; I thought, perhaps, I could thus induce him to eat, but it caused him to weep, when he saw the cup in which I had so often taken my milk before him; he burst into tears; and, more than the bargain, I finished by doing as he did, although I tried all I could to prevent it; you see my luck. I thought I was doing good—consoling him, and I made him more sad than before."

"Yes, but those tears must have been so sweet to him."

"All the same; I should have preferred to console him differently; but I speak of him without telling you who he is; he was an old neighbour of mine, the most honest lad in the world, as gentle and timid as a young girl, and whom I loved as a companion, as a brother."

"Oh! then I can imagine how his sorrows are yours."

"But you will see what a good heart he has. When I left him, I asked him, as I always do, for his commissions, saying to him with a laugh, just to raise his spirits a little, that I was his little housekeeper, and that I should be very exact, very active, to keep his custom. Then he, trying to smile, asked me to bring him one of the romances of Walter Scott, which he used to read to me in the evenings when I worked. This romance is called 'Ivan—Ivanhoe;' yes, that is the name. I liked this book so much, that he read it to me twice. He begged me to go to the same library, not to hire, but to buy the volumes we used to read together—yes, to buy them—and you may judge it is a sacrifice for him, for he is as poor as we are."

"Excellent heart!" said Goualeuse, quite affected.

"There! you are as much moved as I was, when he gave me this commission, my good, little Goualeuse; but you comprehend, the more I felt a desire to weep, the more I tried to laugh; for to weep twice in a visit made expressly to enliven him was too much! So to drive this gloom away, I recalled to his mind the comic story of a Jew, one of the characters of this romance, which formerly had so much amused us. But the more I talked, the more he looked at me with the big, big tears in his eyes. It touched my heart. I had restrained my tears for a quarter of an hour; I ended by doing as he did. When I left him he was sobbing; and I said to myself, furious at my stupidity, 'If this is the way I cheer and console him, it is hardly worth while to go and see him; I, who promised myself to make him laugh! It is astonishing how I have succeeded!'"

At the name of François Germain, Mrs. Seraphin redoubled her attention.

"And what has this young man done to be in prison?" asked Fleur de Marie.

"He!" cried Rigolette, whose compassion gave place to indignation; "he is persecuted by an old monster of a notary, who is also the denouncer of Louise."

"Of Louise, whom you came here to see?"

"The same. She was the servant of the notary, and Germain was his cashier. It would be too long a story to tell you of what they unjustly accuse this poor boy. But what is quite sure is, that this bad man is very angry with these two unfortunates, who have never injured him. But patience—patience; every dog has his day."

Rigolette pronounced these last words with an expression which made Mrs. Seraphin uneasy. Engaging in the conversation, instead of remaining quiet, she said to Fleur de Marie, in a wheedling manner, 'My dear child, it is late; we must go; we are waited for. I can well comprehend that what your friend says interests you, for I, who do not know this young girl and this young man, am much affected. Is it possible people can be so wicked! And what is the name of this bad notary of whom you speak, please?"

Rigolette had no reason to be suspicious of Mrs. Seraphin; nevertheless, remembering the recommendations of Rudolph, who had enjoined on her the greatest reserve on the subject of the secret protection which he granted to Germain and Louise, she regretted she had suffered herself to say, "Patience—every dog has his day."

"This bad man is one M. Ferrand, madam," answered Rigolette; adding very adroitly, to repair her slight indiscretion, "and it is so much the more wicked in him to persecute Louise and Germain thus, as they have no one to interest themselves in their behalf except me, who can be of no use to them."

"What a pity!" said Mrs. Seraphin. "I had hoped the contrary when you said 'But patience.' I thought that you reckoned on some protector to sustain these two unfortunates against this wicked notary."

"Alas! no, madam," answered Rigolette, in order to completely lull the suspicions of Mrs. Seraphin. "Who would be generous enough to take the part of these two poor young folks against a rich and powerful young man like M. Ferrand?"

"Oh, there are hearts generous enough for that!" cried Fleur de Marie, after a moment's reflection, and with constrained warmth. "I know some one who makes it a duty to protect those who suffer, and defend them; for he of whom I speak is as charitable to honest people, as he is formidable to the wicked."

Rigolette looked at Goualeuse with astonishment, and was on the point of saying (thinking of Rudolph) that she also knew some

one who courageously took the part of the weak against the strong; but, still faithful to the requests of her neighbour, she answered Fleur de Marie, "Really! you do know some one generous enough to come to the aid of the poor?"

"Yes. And although I have already implored his pity, his benevolence for other persons, I am sure if he knew the unmerited misfortunes of Louise and M. Germain, he would save them and punish their persecutor; for his justice and goodness are almost inexhaustible as God's!"

Mrs. Seraphin looked at her victim with surprise.

"This little girl would be still more dangerous than we thought," said she to herself "If I had taken pity on her, what she has just said would render the accident inevitable which will rid us of her."

"My good little Goualeuse, since you have such a good acquaintance, I beg you will recommend my Louise and my Germain to him, for they do not deserve their fate," said Rigolette, thinking that her friends might gain by having two defenders instead of one.

"Be tranquil; I promise you to do what I can for your *protégées* with M. Rudolph," said Fleur de Marie.

"M. Rudolph!" cried Rigolette, strangely surprised.

"Certainly," said La Goualeuse.

"M. Rudolph, a travelling clerk?"

"I do not know what he is. But why this astonishment?"

"Because I know a M. Rudolph also."

"Perhaps it is not the same?"

"Let us see; what does he look like?"

"Young!"

"Exactly."

"A face full of nobleness and goodness."

"That's it; just like mine!" said Rigolette, more and more surprised; and, she added, "Is he dark? Has he small moustaches?"

"Yes."

"Is he tall and slender, fine figure, and an air too stylish for a travelling clerk? Does yours look just so?"

"Without a doubt, it is he," answered Fleur de Marie; "only, what is strange is, that you think him a travelling clerk."

"As to that, I am sure of it; he told me so."

"You know him?"

"I know him? He is my neighbour."

"M. Rudolph?"

"He has a chamber on the fourth floor, alongside of mine."

"He! he!"

"What is so astonishing in all this? It is very simple: he only earns fifteen or eighteen hundred francs a-year; he can only hire a modest room, although he has very little regularity about him, for he does not know what his clothes cost him, my dear."

"No, no; it is not the same," said Fleur de Marie, reflecting.

"Yours, then, is a phœnix for order?"

"He of whom I speak, Rigolette," said Fleur de Marie, with enthusiasm. "is all-powerful; his name is only pronounced with love and veneration; his appearance is imposing, and one is almost tempted to kneel before his grandeur and his goodness."

"Then I am at fault, my poor Goualeuse; I say as you do, it is not the same; for mine is neither all-powerful nor imposing. He is a very good sort, very lively, and no one kneels before him—just the contrary; for he has promised to help me wax my floor, and take me a walk on Sunday. You see he is no great lord. But what am I thinking about? I have truly the heart for a walk. And Louise and my poor Germain! as long as they are in prison, there can be no pleasure for me."

For some moments Fleur de Marie reflected profoundly; she recalled to her mind that when she first saw Rudolph he had the appearance and language of the guests of the Ogress, her keeper. Might he not play the part of a travelling clerk with Rigolette? What could be the object of this new transformation? The grisette, seeing the pensive air of Fleur de Marie, said:

"There is no use of cracking your head on this account, my good Goualeuse, we shall soon find out if we know the same M. Rudolph; when you see yours, speak to him of me; when I see mine, I will speak to him of you. In this way we can satisfy ourselves at once."

"And where do you live, Rigolette?"

"Rue du Temple, No. 17."

"Now this is strange, and worth remembering," said Madam Seraphin to herself, having attentively listened to this conversation. "This M. Rudolph, a mysterious and all-powerful personage, who doubtless makes himself pass for a clerk, occupies a room adjoining that of this little sewing-girl, who knows more than she chooses to say. Good, good; if the grisette and the pretended clerk meddle with what does not concern them, we know where to find them."

"When I have spoken to M. Rudolph I will write you," said La Goualeuse; and I will give you my address, so that you can answer; but repeat your address, for fear I should forget it."

"Here, I have one of my cards that I leave at my customers';" and she gave Fleur de Marie a little card, on which was written, in magnificent italics, "Mademoiselle Rigolette, Dressmaker, 17, Rue du Temple."

"It is just as if it were printed, is it not?" added the grisette.

"It was poor Germain who wrote them for me—he was so kind, so thoughtful. Now, look you, it seems as if it were done purposely; one would say I never found out his good qualities until he was unfortunate, and now I am always reproaching myself for having put off so long loving him."

"You love him, then?"

"Oh, dear, yes. I must have a pretext to go and see him in prison. Confess that I am a strange girl!" said Rigolette, stifling a sigh, and laughing through her tears, as the poets say.

"You are as good and generous as ever," said Fleur de Marie, pressing tenderly the hands of her friend.

Old Seraphin had doubtless heard enough of the conversation of the young girl, for she said, almost roughly, to Fleur de Marie, "Come, come, my dear, let us go; it is late; here is a quarter of an hour lost."

"What a surly look this old woman has? I don't like her face," whispered Rigolette to Fleur de Marie. Then she added, aloud, "When you come to Paris, my good Goualeuse, do not forget me; your visit will give me so much pleasure. I shall be so happy to pass a day with you, to show you my housekeeping, my room, my birds! I have birds—it is my luxury."

"I will try to come and see you, but I will certainly write. Good-bye, Rigolette, good-bye. If you knew how happy I am to have met you?"

"And I too! But this shall not be the last time, I hope; and then I am so impatient to know if your M. Rudolph is the same as mine. Write me soon on this subject, I entreat you?"

"Yes, yes. Adieu, Rigolette."

"Adieu, my good little Goualeuse;" and the two girls embraced each other tenderly, concealing their emotion. Rigolette entered the prison to see Louise, and Fleur de Marie got into a hackney-coach, with old Seraphin, who ordered the coachman to go to Batignolles, and to stop at the city gate.

A cross-road led from this place almost in a straight line to the banks of the Seine, not far from the Ravageurs' Island. Fleur de Marie being unacquainted with Paris, did not perceive that the carriage was driven on a different road from that to Saint Denis. It was only when the vehicle stopped at Batignolles that she said to Mrs. Seraphin, who invited her to get out.

"But it seems to me, madam, that this is not the road to Bouqueval; and then how can we go from hence to the farm on foot?"

"All I can say to you, my dear," answered the housekeeper, "is, that I execute the orders of your benefactors, and that you would cause them much trouble if you hesitate to follow me."

"Oh! madam, do not think it," cried Fleur de Marie; "you are sent by them—I have no questions to ask—I follow you blindly; only tell me if Madam Georges is well!"

"She is perfectly so."

"And—M. Rudolph?"

"Perfectly well also."

"You know him, then, ma'am? Yet just now, when I spoke of him with Rigolette, you said nothing."

"Because I must say nothing—I have my orders."

"Did he give them to you?"

"Isn't she curious, the dear; isn't she curious?" said the housekeeper, laughing.

"You are right; pardon my questions, ma'am. Since we go on foot to the place to which you conduct me," added Fleur de Marie, sweetly, "I shall know what I so much desire to know."

"In fact, my dear, before a quarter of an hour we shall have arrived."

The housekeeper, having left behind her the last houses of Batignolles, followed, with Fleur de Marie, a grassy footpath. The day was calm and beautiful, the sky towards the west half-concealed by red and purple clouds; the sun, beginning to decline, cast his oblique rays on the heights of Colombe, on the other side of the Seine. As Fleur de Marie drew near the banks of the river, her pale cheeks became slightly coloured; she inhaled with delight the sharp, pure air of the country, and cried, in a burst of artless joy, "Oh! there in the middle of the river, do you see that pretty little island covered with willows and poplars, with the white house on the shore? How charming this habitation must be in summer, when all the trees are covered with leaves! What repose, what refreshing air must be found there."

"Verily!" said Mrs. Seraphin with a strange smile, "I am delighted that you find the island pretty."

"Why, madam?"

"Because we are going there."

"To that island?"

"Yes; does it surprise you?"

"A little, ma'am."

"And if you should find your friends there?"

"What do you say?"

"Your friends collected there, to celebrate your deliverance from prison! would you not by more agreeably surprised?"

"Can it be possible; M. Rudolph? Ah! is it true I go to see Madam George's? I cannot believe it."

"Yet a little patience—in fifteen minutes you will see her, and then you will believe?"

"What I cannot comprehend," added Fleur de Marie, thoughtfully, "is that Madam Georges awaits me there, instead of at the farm?"

"Always so curious, the dear—always so curious!"

"How indiscreet I am, ma'am?" said Fleur de Marie, smiling.

"To punish you, I have a mind to tell you of a surprise that your friends intend for you."

"A surprise? for me, madam?"

"Hold, leave me alone, little spy—you will make me speak in spite of myself."

We will leave Mrs. Seraphin and her victim on the road which led to the river.

We will precede them both for some moments to the island.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ON THE BOAT.

AT night, the appearance of the island inhabited by the Martial family was gloomy, but in the brilliant sunlight, nothing could be more charming and cheerful than the cursed dwelling-place.

Bordered by willows and poplars, and almost entirely covered with thick grass, intersected with winding paths of yellow gravel, the island contained a small vegetable garden and a number of fruit-trees. In this orchard was situated the thatched-roof dwelling where Martial had wished to retire with François and Amandine. From this place the island terminated at its point by a breakwater, formed of large piles, to prevent the washing away of the earth.

Before the house was an arbour of green trellis-work, reaching quite to the landing-place, destined to support during the summer the hopvine and honeysuckle under whose shade were arranged the seats and tables of the guests.

At one of the extremities of the main building, painted white and covered with tiles, a woodhouse, surmounted by a granary, formed a wing, much lower than the principal edifice. Immediately over this wing was a window with shutters covered with plates of iron, and fastened exteriorly by two bars of the same material.

Three boats were lying at the landing-place, and at the bottom of one of them Nicholas was trying how the trap worked which he had arranged.

Mounted on a bench outside of the arbour, Calabash, with her eyes shaded with her hand, was looking in the direction where she expected Seraphin and Fleur de Marie to appear.

"No one yet, neither old nor young," said Calabash, descending from her bench, and addressing Nicholas: "it will be as yesterday! Like poor fellows waiting for their ship to come in! If these women don't come before a half-hour, we must go; the affair of Bras-Rouge is better worth our while; he is waiting for us. The broker is to be at his house in the Champs Elysées at five o'clock—we must be there before him. This very morning La Chouette repeated it to us."

"You are right," answered Nicholas, leaving his boat. "May the thunder crush this old woman, who physics us for no purpose! The trap works like a charm—of the two jobs perhaps we shall have neither."

"Besides, Bras-Rouge and Barbillon have need of us—of themselves they can do nothing."

"It is true; for while one does the business, Red-Arm must remain outside his tavern to watch, and Barbillon is not strong enough to drag the broker into the cellar alone; this old woman will kick."

"Did not La Chouette tell us, laughingly, that she kept the Maître d'Ecole as a boarder in this cellar?"

"Not in this one; in another which is much deeper, and inundated when the river is high."

"Mustn't he vegetate there, in that cellar! To be there all alone, and blind as he is, after the accident to him!"

"He will see clear there, if he sees nowhere else: the cellar is as dark as a furnace."

"All the same; when he has sung all the songs he knows to amuse himself, the time must appear devilishly long to him."

"La Chouette says that he amuses himself in hunting rats, and that this cellar is very full of game."

"I say, Nicholas, speaking of individuals who must be rather wearied, fatigued," said Calabash, with a ferocious smile, pointing with her finger to the window just described, "there is one there who must be sucking his own blood."

"Bah! he is asleep. Since this morning he has made no noise; and his dog is silent."

"Perhaps he has strangled it for food; these two days past they must have been almost mad with hunger up there."

"It is their business. Martial may endure all this as long as he pleases, if it amuses him; when he has finished, we will say that he died from a severe illness; there will be no difficulty."

"You think so?"

"Most surely. On going this morning to Ansières, mother met Férot, the fisherman; as he expressed his surprise at not having seen his friend Martial for two days, she told him that Martial did not leave his bed, he was so ill, and his life was despaired of. He swallowed all that just like honey; he will tell it to others—and when the affair happens it will seem all natural."

"Yes, but he will not die at once; it takes a long time in this way."

"There is no other way to manage it. This madman, Martial, when he has a mind, is as wicked as the devil, and as strong as a bull in the bargain; had he suspected us, we could not have approached him without danger; while with his door once well nailed up on the outside, what can he do? His window was already ironed."

"He could loosen the bars by breaking away the plaster with his knife, which he would have done, if, mounted on a ladder, I had not mangled his hands with the hatchet every time he commenced his work!"

"What a duty!" said the other, chuckling; "how much you must have been amused!"

"I had to give you time to arrive with the iron plate and bars which you went to Micou's for."

"How he must have foamed. Dear brother!"

"He ground his teeth like a madman; two or three times he tried to push me off with

blows from his club, but then, having but one hand free, he could not work at the grating."

"Fortunately, there is no fire-place in the room!"

"Yes, and the door is strong and his hands wounded! but for this he would be capable of making a hole through the plank."

"No, no, there is no danger that he can escape. His bier is more solid than if it were made of oak and lead."

"I say—when La Louve gets out of prison, and comes here to seek her man, as she calls him?"

"Well! we will tell her to look for him."

"*Apropos*, do you know that if mother had not shut up these scamps of children, they would have been capable of gnawing the door like rats, to deliver Martial! That little scoundrel, François, is a real devil since he suspects that we have shut up our big brother."

"But are you going to leave them in the room up-stairs while we are away from the island? Their window is not grated—they have only to descend from the outside.

At this moment cries and sobs in the house attracted the attention of Nicholas and Calabash. They saw the opened door of the ground-floor shut violently: a moment after the pale and sinister face of the widow appeared at the kitchen-window. With her long, bony arm she beckoned her children to come to the house.

"Come, there is a squabble! I bet it is François who kicks," said Nicholas.

"Scoundrel of a Martial! except for him the boy would have been all alone. Watch well, and if you see the two females coming, call me."

While Calabash, mounted on the bench, awaited their approach, Nicholas entered the house. Little Amandine, kneeling in the middle of the kitchen, wept, and asked pardon for her brother François. He, irritated and threatening, stood in one of the corners of the room, brandishing a hatchet. He seemed this time to make a desperate resistance to the wishes of his mother.

As usual, quiet and calm, she pointed to the half-open door leading to the cellar, and made a sign to her son that she wished François shut up there.

"I will not go there!" cried the determined child, whose eyes sparkled like those of a wild cat; "you wish to let us die with hunger, like brother Martial."

"Mamma, for the love of God, leave us up-stairs in our own room, as you did yesterday," asked the little girl in a supplicating tone clasping her hands; "in the dark cellar we will be so much afraid!"

The widow looked at Nicholas in an impatient manner, as if to reproach him for not having executed her orders, and she again pointed to François.

Seeing his brother approach, the young boy brandished his hatchet in a desperate manner, and cried, "If you want to shut me up there, whether it is brother, mother, or Calabash—I strike, and the hatchet cuts!"

Both Nicholas and the widow felt the necessity of preventing the two children from going to the assistance of Martial during their absence, and also to conceal from them what was about to take place on the river. But Nicholas, as cowardly as he was ferocious, and not caring to receive a blow from the dangerous hatchet with which his brother was armed, hesitated to approach him.

The widow, vexed at the hesitation of her eldest son, pushed him roughly by the shoulder towards François.

But Nicholas, again drawing back, cried, "If he wounds me, what shall I do, mother? You know well enough I am about to need the use of both my arms, and I still feel the blow that Martial has given me."

The widow shrugged her shoulders with contempt, and made a step towards François.

"Do not come near me, mother!" cried the enraged boy, "or you shall be paid for all the blows you have given me and Amandine."

"Brother, rather let yourself be locked up. Oh! do not strike our mother!" cried Amandine, terrified.

At this moment Nicholas saw on a chair a large woollen coverlet, which was used for the ironing table; he seized it, and adroitly threw it over the head of François, who, in spite of all his efforts, finding himself entangled in its thick folds, could make no use of his arms. Then Nicholas threw himself upon him, and, with the aid of his mother, carried him into the cellar. Amandine had remained kneeling in the middle of the kitchen. As soon as she saw the fate of her brother, she arose quickly, and, notwithstanding her alarm, went of her own accord to join him in his gloomy prison. The door was double-locked on the brother and sister.

"It is the fault of Martial, if these children are like unchained devils against us," cried Nicholas.

"Nothing has been heard in his chamber since this morning," said the widow, in a thoughtful manner, and she shuddered; "nothing."

"That proves, mother that you did well to say to Férot, the fisherman of Asnières, that Martial was sick in bed, and like to die. In this way, when all is over, no one will be astonished."

After a moment's pause, as if she wished to escape a horrible thought, the widow said, roughly, "Did La Chouette come here while I was at Asnières?"

"Yes, mother."

"Why did she not remain and go with us to Bras-Rouge? I am suspicious of her."

"Bah! you suspect everybody, mother; to-day it is La Chouette; yesterday it was Bras-Rouge."

"Bras-Rouge is at liberty; my son is at

Toulon: they both committed the same robbery."

"You always repeat that old story. Bras-Rouge escaped because he is as cunning as a steel-trap, that's all. La Chouette did not remain here, because she had an appointment at two o'clock, near the Observatory, with the tall man in black, on whose account she carried off this girl from the country, with the assistance of the Maitre d'Ecole and Tortillard; and it was even Barbillon who drove the hack which this tall man in black hired for the occasion. Come, now, mother, why should La Chouette inform against us, since she tells us what jobs she has in hand, and we do not tell her ours? for she knows nothing of our proposed drowning scrape. Be tranquil mother—dog don't eat dog. The day's work will be a good one. When I think that the broker has often twenty or thirty thousand francs' worth of diamonds in her bag, and that in two hours' time we shall have her in Red Arm's cellar. Thirty thousand francs in diamonds! only think of it."

"And while we hold the broker, Bras-Rouge remains outside?" said the widow, with an air of suspicion.

"And where should he be? If anyone should come in, must he not answer, and prevent them approaching the place where we are doing our job?"

"Nicholas, Nicholas!" cried Calabash, from without, "here are the two women."

"Quick, quick, mother! your shawl: I will row you over—it will be so much done," said Nicholas.

The widow had replaced her mourning-cap with one of black tulle. She wrapped herself in a large shawl of white and gray tartan, locked the kitchen door, placed the key behind one of the shutters, and followed her son to the landing-place.

Almost in spite of herself, before she left the island, she cast a long, lingering look at Martial's window, knit her brows, bit her lips, then, after a sudden fit of shivering, she murmured to herself, "It is his fault—his own fault."

"Nicholas! do you see them? there, just by that rising ground," cried Calabash, pointing to the other side of the river, where Mrs. Seraphin and Fleur de Marie appeared, descending a small path leading to the shore, near a small elevation, on which was placed a plaster-kiln.

"Let us wait for the signal, and have no bungling," said Nicholas.

"Are you blind? Don't you recognise the fat woman who came here the day before yesterday? Look at her orange shawl, and see what a hurry the little peasant girl is in! poor little puss—it is plain to see she don't know what is coming."

"Yes, I see the fat woman now. Come, it looks like work."

"The old woman is making a sign with her handkerchief," said Calabash: "there they are on the shore."

"Come, come, step on board, mother," cried Nicholas, unfastening the boat: "come in the boat with the hole, so that the women will not suspect anything. And you, Calabash, jump into the other one, my girl—row strong. Oh! hold, take my hook, put it alongside of you—it is pointed like a lance—it may be of use—now, push ahead!" said the bandit, placing in the boat a long boathook, one end of which terminated with a sharp spike of iron.

In a few moments the two boats touched the shore, where Mrs. Seraphin and Fleur de Marie had been waiting impatiently.

While Nicholas was tying his boat to a post, Mrs. Seraphin approached him, and whispered, hurriedly, "Say that Madam Georges awaits us;" then she said in a loud tone, "We are a little behindhand, my lad."

"Yes, my good lady; Madam Georges has asked for you several times."

"You see, my dear, Madam Georges is waiting for us," said Mrs. Seraphin, turning towards Fleur de Marie, who, notwithstanding her confidence, had felt her heart beat at the appearance of the sinister faces of the widow, Calabash and Nicholas.

But the name of Madam Georges reassured her, and she answered, "I am also very impatient to see her; happily, the passage is short."

"Won't the dear lady be happy!" said Mrs. Seraphin. Then, turning towards Nicholas she added: "Come, bring your boat a little nearer, that we can embark;" and, in a low tone, she whispered, "The little one must be drowned; if she comes up, put her under again."

"It is settled; don't you be afraid; when I make a sign, give me your hand. She will sink all alone—all is prepared—you have nothing to fear," answered Nicholas, in a low tone. Then, with savage imperturbability, without being touched either with the beauty or youth of Fleur de Marie, he offered her his arm.

The girl leaned lightly on him, and entered the boat. "Now your turn, my good lady," said Nicholas to Mrs. Seraphin. And he offered to assist her.

Whether it was a presentiment, suspicion, or only a fear that she could not jump quick enough from the boat where La Goualeuse and Nicholas were seated when it should sink, the housekeeper of Jacques Ferrand said to Nicholas, drawing back, "On second thoughts, I will go in the boat of mademoiselle." And she took a seat alongside of Calabash.

"Very good," said Nicholas, exchanging a glance with his sister; and, with the end of his oar, he shoved off his boat, his sister doing the same as soon as Mrs. Seraphin had taken her seat. Standing on the shore, erect, immovable, indifferent to this scene, the

widow, pensive and absorbed, kept her eyes fixed on Martial's window, which could be distinguished, through the poplar trees, from the shore.

During this time the two boats moved slowly off towards the opposite side.

CHAPTER XXXV.

DOES NOT A MEETING LIKE THIS MAKE AMENDS.

BEFORE we acquaint the reader with the continuation of the drama which passed on the boats, we will go back a little. A few moments after Fleur de Marie had left Saint Lazare with Mrs. Seraphin, La Louve had also quitted the prison.

Thanks to the recommendation of Madam Armand and of the director, who wished to recompense her for her good action towards Mont Saint Jean, she had been also pardoned and dismissed. A complete change had taken place in this creature, heretofore so headstrong, vile, and corrupted.

Keeping constantly in mind the description made by Fleur de Marie of a peaceful and solitary life, La Louve held in disgust her past crimes.

Confiding in the aid which Fleur de Marie had promised her in the name of her unknown benefactor, La Louve determined to make this laudable proposition to her lover, not without the bitter fear of a refusal, for the Goualeuse, in leading her to blush for the past, had also given her a consciousness of her position towards Martial.

Once free, La Louve only thought of seeing him. She had received no news from him for many days. In the hope of meeting him on Ravageurs' Island, she decided to wait there if she did not find him; she got into a cab, and was rapidly driven to the Bridge of Asniéres, which she crossed about fifteen minutes before Mrs. Seraphin and Fleur de Marie, coming on foot, had arrived on the shore near the plaster-kiln.

As Martial did not come to take La Louve in his boat to the island, she applied to the old fisherman named Férot, who lived near the bridge.

At four o'clock in the afternoon a cab stopped at the entrance of a little street of Asniéres village. La Louve gave five francs to the coachman, jumped to the ground, and ran hastily to the abode of Férot.

Having thrown off her prison dress, she wore a robe of dark green merino, a red shawl, imitation of cashmere, and a lace cap trimmed with ribbons: her thick crispy hair was scarcely smoothed. In her impatience to see Martial, she had dressed herself with more haste than care. On reaching the house of the fisherman, she found him seated at the door mending his nets.

As soon as she saw him she cried out, "Your boat, Férot—quick, quick."

"Ah! is it you? Good day, good day. You have not been here for a long time."

"Yes, but your boat—quick—to the island."

"Ah, well! fate will have it so; my good girl, it is impossible to-day."

"How?"

"My boy has taken my boat to go with the others to a rowing match at Saint Ouen. There is not a single boat left on the whole shore from this to the docks."

"Zounds!" cried La Louve, stamping and clenching her fists; "it happens so expressly for me!"

"Its true, on my word. I am very sorry I cannot convey you to the island, for, without doubt, he must be worse."

"Worse! Who?"

"Martial."

"Martial?" cried La Louve, seizing Férot by the collar; "is Martial sick?"

"Did you not know it?"

"Martial?"

"Yes, certainly; but you will tear my blouse; do be quiet."

"He is sick. Since when?"

"Two or three days ago."

"It is false; he would have written to me."

"Ah, well, yes! he is too sick to write."

"Too sick to write! And he is on the island; you are sure of that?"

"Don't get me into a scrape; this is the story: this morning I said to the widow, 'For two days past I have not seen Martial; his boat is there. Is he in the city?' Thereupon the widow looked at me with her wicked eyes: 'He is sick on the island; and so sick that he will never come off again.' I said to myself, 'How can that be? Three days ago'—Well," said Férot, interrupting himself, "where are you going to—where the devil is she running to now?"

Believing the life of Martial menaced by the inhabitants of the island, La Louve, overcome with alarm, and transported with rage, listened no longer to the fisherman, but ran along the Seine.

Some topographical details are indispensable to understand the following scene.

The island approached nearer the left side of the river than the right shore, from whence Fleur de Marie and Mrs. Seraphin had embarked. La Louve was on the left side. Without being very steep, the hills on the island concealed, all its length, the view of one shore from the other. Thus, La Louve had not seen the embarcation of La Goualeuse, and the Martial family, of course, could not see her as she ran along the shore on the opposite side.

We recall to the reader, that the country-house belonging to Doctor Griffon, where the Count de Saint Rémy temporarily dwelt, was built on the hill-side, near the shore where La Louve was wandering, half-distracted.

She passed, without seeing them, near two persons, who, struck with her haggard look, turned to follow her at a distance. These

two persons were the Count de Saint Rémy and Doctor Griffon.

The first impulse of La Louve, on learning the peril of her lover, had been to run impetuously towards the place where she knew he was in danger. But as she approached the island, she thought of the difficulty of getting there. As the old fisherman had told her, she could not count on any strange boat, and no one from the Martial family would come for her.

Breathless, her face flushed, her eyes sparkling, she stopped opposite a point of the island which, forming a curve at this place, was nearest to the mainland. Through the leafless branches of the willows and poplars, La Louve could see the roof of the house, where, perhaps, Martial was dying. At this sight, uttering a fearful groan, she tore off her shawl and cap, and slipping down her robe, keeping on her petticoat, she threw herself into the river, and waded until she lost her footing, when she began to swim vigorously towards the island.

It was the climax of savage energy.

At each stroke, the thick and long hair of La Louve, untied by the violence of her movements, shook about her head like a shaggy mane of copper colour.

Suddenly, from the other side of the island resounded a cry of distress, of terrible, desperate agony. La Louve shuddered, and stopped short. Then treading water, with one hand she pushed back her thick hair, and listened. A new cry was heard, but more feeble, more supplicating, convulsive, expiring—and all relapsed into a profound silence. "My Martial!" cried La Louve, swimming again with all her strength. She thought she had recognised the voice of Martial.

The count and doctor had not been able to follow La Louve quick enough to prevent what she accomplished. They arrived opposite to the island at the moment that the two fearful screams were heard, and stopped, as much alarmed as La Louve. Seeing her struggle intrepidly against the current, they cried, "The poor thing will be drowned!" These fears were vain; she swam like an otter; still a few more strokes, and she reached the land. She was getting out of the water by the assistance of the poles, which as we have said, formed a breakwater at the end of the island, when she perceived the body of a young girl, dressed as a peasant, sustained by her clothes, floating down the current.

To grasp with one hand the poles, and with the other to seize hold of the girl by her dress, such was the movement of La Louve, as rapid as thought. Then she drew her so violently towards her and within the stakes, that, for a moment, she disappeared under the water, which was of no great depth at this place.

Endued with no common strength and address, La Louve raised up La Goualeuse (for it was she), whom she had not yet recognised, took her up in her robust arms, as one would have taken a child, made some steps in the water, and, finally, laid her on the green bank of the island.

"Courage, courage!" cried M. de Saint Rémy to her, a witness, as well as Doctor Griffon, of this bold act. "We are going to cross the bridge, and will come to your aid in a boat." La Louve did not hear these words. Let us repeat, that from the right shore of the Seine, where Nicholas, Calabash, and their mother remained after the consummation of their horrible crime, nothing could be seen of the other side, owing to the height of the island. Fleur de Marie, suddenly drawn within the row of piles by La Louve, having plunged for a moment, and not reappearing to the sight of her murderers, they believed their victim drowned and ingulfed.

Some few moments afterward, the current brought down another body, in an eddy, which La Louve did not perceive. It was the corpse of the notary's housekeeper. Dead—quite dead—this one.

Nicholas and Calabash had as much interest as Jacques Ferrand to get rid of this witness, the accomplice of their new crime; so when the boat with the hole sunk with Fleur de Marie, Nicholas, springing into the boat of his sister, nearly upset it, and seizing a favourable moment, threw the housekeeper into the river, and despatched her with the boat-hook.

Out of breath and exhausted, La Louve, kneeling on the ground alongside of Fleur de Marie, recruited her strength, and examined the features of her whom she had rescued from death. Let her surprise be imagined when she recognised her companion of the prison; who had exercised upon her destiny an influence so rapid, so ameliorating. In her surprise, for a moment she forgot Martial.

"La Goualeuse!" cried she.

With bended body, leaning on her hands and knees, her hair dishevelled, her clothes dripping with water, she contemplated the unhappy child, extended, almost expiring on the ground. Pale, inanimate, her eyes half open and without expression, her beautiful flaxen hair falling flat over her forehead, her blue lips, her small hand, already stiff and icy—one would have thought her dead. "La Goualeuse!" repeated La Louve, "what chance! I who came to tell my Martial the good and evil she had done me with her words and promises; the resolution that I had taken. Poor little thing! I find her here, dead. But no, no," cried La Louve, approaching still nearer to Fleur de Marie, and feeling an almost imperceptible breath escape from her mouth: "No! she breathes still! I have saved her from death! that has never happened to me before, to save anyone. Ah! that does me good; it makes me warm. Yes, but my Martial I must save also. Perhaps, at this moment, he is expiring; his mother and brother are capable of killing him. Yet I cannot leave this poor little thing here. I

will carry her to the widow's; she must take care of her, and show me Martial, or I will break everything—I will kill everybody! Oh! neither mother, brother, nor sister do I care for, when I know my Martial is there!"

And immediately getting up, La Louve carried Fleur de Marie in her arms. With this light burden she ran towards the house, not doubting but that the widow and her daughter, notwithstanding their wickedness, would lend their assistance to Fleur de Marie.

When she reached the highest part of the island, whence could be seen both shores of the Seine, Nicholas, his mother, and Calabash were far off, going in all haste to Bras-Rouge's tavern.

At this moment also, a man, who concealed in the plaster-kiln had invisibly assisted at this horrible tragedy, disappeared, believing, with the murderers, that the crime was executed.

This man was Jacques Ferrand.

One of Nicholas's boats was tied to a pile near the place where Goualeuse and old Seraphin had embarked.

Hardly had Jacques Ferrand left the plaster-kiln to return to Paris, than M. de Saint Rémy and Doctor Griffon hastily crossed the Bridge of Asnières, running towards the island, thinking to reach it by Nicholas's boat, which they had seen from afar.

To her great surprise, on arriving at the house of the Ravageurs, La Louve found the door closed. Placing the still inanimate body of Fleur de Marie under the arbour, she drew near the house. She knew the window of Martial's chamber. What was her surprise to see the shutters covered with iron plates, and fastened with bars of the same material!

Suspecting partly the truth, La Louve uttered a hoarse, resounding cry, and began to call with all her strength, "Martial! my love!"

No one answered. Alarmed at this silence, La Louve began to walk around the building like a savage beast who scents his mate, and seeks, with roaring, the entrance of the den where he is confined.

From time to time she cried, "My man—are you there, my man?" In her rage she shook the bars of the kitchen window—she knocked against the wall—she kicked against the door.

All at once a hollow sound answered from the interior of the house. La Louve shuddered—listened. The noise ceased.

"My man has heard me! I must enter, even if I have to gnaw the door with my teeth!" And again she uttered her savage cries.

Several blows, feebly struck on the inside of the window shutters of Martial's room, answered to her shouts.

"He is there!" cried she, stopping suddenly under her lover's window, "he is there! If needs must, I will tear off the iron shutters with my nails, but I will open them."

So saying, she saw a large ladder placed behind one of the blinds of the lower rooms; in drawing this blind violently towards her, La Louve caused the key to fall which the widow had concealed on the window bench. "If it unlocks," said La Louve, trying the key in the lock, "I can go up to his chamber. It opens," cried she, with joy; "my friend is saved!"

Once in the kitchen, she was struck by the cries of the children, who shut up in the cellar, and hearing an extraordinary noise called for help.

The widow, believing no one would come to the island or house during her absence, had contented herself with locking François and Amandine in the cellar, leaving the key in the lock.

Set at liberty by La Louve, the brother and sister rushed precipitately from the cellar, crying, "Oh, La Louve, save brother Martial! they wish to kill him; two days he has been walled up in his room."

"They have not wounded him?"

"No, no; we believe not."

"I arrive in time!" cried La Louve, rushing to the staircase; then suddenly stopping, she said, "And La Goualeuse! whom I forget. Amandine, some fire at once; you and your brother, bring here, near the chimney-place, a poor girl who was drowning. I saved her. She is under the arbour. François, a pair of pincers, a hatchet, an iron bar, so that I can break down the door of my Martial!"

"Here is an axe to split wood, but it is too heavy for you," said the young boy.

"Too heavy!" sneered La Louve, and she lifted with ease the iron mace which, under any other circumstances, she could hardly have raised from the ground. Then mounting the stairs four at a time, she repeated to the two children, "Run and bring in the girl, and place her near the fire." In two bounds, La Louve was at the bottom of the corridor, at Martial's door. "Courage, my friend—here is your Louve!" cried she, and raising the axe with both hands, with a furious blow she shook the door.

"It is nailed on the outside. Draw out the nails," cried Martial, in a feeble voice.

Throwing herself on her knees in the corridor, with the aid of the pincers and of her nails, which she tore, and her fingers, which she cut, La Louve succeeded in drawing out the spikes which fastened the door.

At length the door was opened.

Martial, pale, his hands covered with blood, fell almost lifeless into the arms of his darling.

"At length I see you! I hold you! I have you!" cried La Louve, receiving Martial in her arms with joy and savage energy; then sustaining him, almost carrying him, she led him to a seat placed in the corridor.

During some moments Martial remained weak and feeble, endeavouring to recover from this violent shock, which had exhausted his failing strength. La Louve saved her

lover at the moment when, in a state of despair, he felt himself about to die, less from the want of food than from the deprivation of air, impossible to be renewed in a small room without a chimney, without any aperture, and hermetically closed through the atrocious foresight of Calabash, who had stopped up with old linen even the smallest fissures of the door and window.

Palpitating with happiness and anguish, her eyes wet with tears, La Louve, on her knees, watched the smallest movements of Martial. By degrees he seemed to recover, as he breathed the pure and salubrious air. After a slight shudder, he raised his weary head, uttered a long sigh, and opened his eyes.

"Martial, it is I! your Louve; how do you feel?"

"Better," answered he, in a feeble voice.

"What will you have? water, vinegar?"

"No, no," cried Martial, less and less oppressed. "Air! oh, some air! nothing but air!"

La Louve, at the risk of cutting her hand, broke the glass of a window which she could not open without moving a heavy table.

"Now I breathe! I breathe! my head is relieved;" said Martial, coming quite to himself. Then, as if for the first time recalling to mind the services she had rendered him, he cried, in a tone of ineffable gratitude, "Without you, I should have died, my good Louve."

"Well, well; how are you now?"

"Better and better."

"Are you hungry?"

"No, I am too weak. I suffered most from want of air; finally, I suffocated! it was frightful!"

"And now?"

"I live again! I come out from the tomb; and I come out—thanks to you."

"But your hands, your poor hands! these wounds? Who did this—curse them!"

"Nicholas and Calabash, not daring to attack me openly a second time, shut me in my chamber, and left me to die with hunger. I tried to prevent them from nailing up my window—my sister cut my hands with the hatchet!"

"The monsters! they wished to have it believed that you were dead from some sickness; your mother had already spread the report that you were in a dying state. Your mother, my man, your mother!"

"Hold! do not speak to me of her," said Martial, bitterly; then, for the first time, remarking the wet clothes, and strange attire of La Louve, he cried, "What has happened to you—you hair is streaming with water? You are without your dress."

"What matters it? You are saved—saved!"

"But explain to me why you are wet."

"I knew you were in danger—I could find no boat."

"And you swam here?"

"Yes. But your hands; let me kiss them. You suffer—the monsters! And I was not here!"

"Oh! my brave Louve," cried Martial, with enthusiasm; "brave among all brave creatures."

"Did you not write here 'Death to dastards?'"

And La Louve showed her arm, where these words were written in indelible characters.

"Intrepid! But you feel the cold, you tremble."

"It is not the cold."

"Never mind. Go in there; take Calabash's cloak to wrap yourself in."

"But"

"I wish it."

In a second, La Louve was enveloped in a plaid cloak, and returned.

"For me, to run the risk of drowning!" repeated Martial, looking at her with pride.

"No risk! A poor girl was almost drowned. I saved her. On reaching the island"—

"You saved her also—where is she?"

"Below with the children; they are taking care of her."

"And who is this young girl?"

"If you knew what a chance—what a happy chance! She is one of my chums in Saint Lazare—a very extraordinary girl, you be sure!"

"How is that?"

"Imagine that I loved her and hated her, because she at the same time planted both death and happiness in my heart."

"She?"

"Yes; concerning you."

"Me?"

"Listen, Martial." Then interrupting herself, she added, "No, No. I shall never dare."

"What is it, then?"

"I wished to ask something of you. I came to see you on this account; for when I left Paris I did not know that you were in danger."

"Well! speak."

"I dare not."

"You dare not—after what you have just done for me?"

"Exactly; it would seem as if I asked a recompense."

"Asked a recompense! And do I not owe you one? Did you not take care of me, night and day, during my sickness last year?"

"Are you not my Martial?"

"Then you should speak to me frankly, because I am your Martial, and will be always."

"Always, Martial?"

"Always! true as I am called Martial. For me, there shall be no other woman in the world but you, La Louve. No matter what you have been—that's my look out. I love you—you love me; and I owe my life to you.

But, since you have been in prison, I am no longer the same; much has happened I have reflected; and you shall no more be what you have been."

"What do you mean to say?"

"I never wish to leave you again. Neither do I wish to leave François and Amandine."

"Your little brother and sister?"

"Yes; from this day I must be to them a father—you comprehend. This gives me duties to perform, and tames me. I am obliged to take charge of them. They wished to make finished thieves of them; to save them, I shall take them away."

"Where?"

"I don't know; but certainly far from Paris."

"And me?"

"You? I will take you also."

"Take me also?" cried La Louve, in a joyous delirium. She could not believe in so much happiness. "I shall not leave you?"

"No, my brave Louve, never. You shall aid me to bring up these children. I know you. On saying to you, I wish that my poor little Amandine should be a virtuous girl, I know what you will be for her; a good mother."

"Oh! thank you, Martial, thank you!"

"We will live as honest work-folks; be easy, we will find work; we will toil like negroes. At least, these children shall not be gallows-birds, like their father and mother. I shall not hear myself called any more the son and brother of a guilloti né; in fine, I shall no more pass through streets where I am known. But what is the matter?"

"Martial, I am afraid I shall become crazy."

"Crazy?"

"Crazy with joy!"

"Why?"

"Because this is too much."

"What?"

"What you ask me. Oh! it is too much. Saving the Goualeuse, this has brought me this happiness; it must be so."

"But once more, what is the matter?"

"What you have just said. Oh, Martial! Martial!"

"Well?"

"I came to ask you!"

"To leave Paris?"

"Yes," answered she, quickly; "to go with you in the woods, where we would have a nice little house, children whom I should love; oh! how I should love them! how your Louve would love the children of her Martial; or, rather, if you wished it," said La Louve, trembling, "I would call you my husband; for we shall not have the place unless you consent to this," she hastened to add, quickly.

Martial, in his turn, looked at La Louve with astonishment, not in the least understanding her words. "Of what place do you speak?"

"A gamekeeper's."

"That I shall have?"

"And who will give it to me?"

"The protectors of the girl whom I have saved."

"Who is she, then?"

"I don't know; I can't understand anything; but in my life I have never seen, never heard anything like her; she is like a fairy to read what one has in the heart. When I told her how much I loved you, instantly, on that account, she became interested, not by using hard words (you know how I would have stood that), but by speaking to me of a very laborious, hard life, tranquilly passed with you, according to your taste, in the midst of the forest; only, according to her idea, instead of being a poacher you were a gamekeeper, and I your wife; and then our children were to run to meet you when you returned at night from your rounds, with the dogs, your gun on your shoulder; and then we would sup at the door of the cabin, in the cool of the evening, under the large trees; and then we would retire to rest so happy, so peaceful. What shall I say? in spite of myself I listened; it was like a charm. If you knew—she spoke so well, so well—that—all that she said, I thought I could see; I dreamed wide awake!"

"Oh! yes; it would be a happy life," said Martial, sighing in his turn; "without being altogether black at heart, poor François has associated too much with Calabash and Nicholas; so that the good air of the woods will be much better for him than the air of the city. Amandine could help you in the house; I would be a good keeper, as I was a famous poacher. I should have you for manager, my brave Louve; and then, as you say, with children, what should we need? When once one is accustomed to the forest, one is quite at home; a hundred years would pass as one day; but, see now, I am a fool. Hold! you should not have spoken to me of this life; it only causes regrets, that's all."

"I let you go on, because you say exactly what I did to La Goualeuse."

"How?"

"Yes, in listening to these fairy tales, I said to her, 'What a pity that these castles in the air, La Goualeuse, are not the truth!' Do you know what she answered, Martial?" said La Louve, her eyes sparkling with joy.

"No!"

"'Let Martial marry you; promise both of you to live an honest life, and this place, which causes you so much envy, I am almost sure to obtain for you on leaving the prison,' was her answer."

"A gamekeeper's place for me?"

"Yes, for you."

"But you are right—it is a dream. If it only were needful that I should marry you to obtain this place, my brave Louve, it should be done to-morrow, if I had the

means; for, from to-day you are my wife—my true wife."

"Martial, I your real wife?"

"My real, my sole wife, and I wish you to call me your husband—it is just the same as if the mayor had joined us."

"Oh! La Goualeuse was right; it makes one so proud to say, 'My husband!' Martial—you shall see your Louve keeping house, at work! you shall see,"

"But this place—do you believe?"

"Poor little Goualeuse, if she is deceived it is others' fault; for she appeared to believe what she told me. Besides, just now, on leaving the prison, the inspectress told me that the protectors of La Goualeuse, people of high rank, had taken her from the prison this very day: that proves that she has benefactors, and that she can do what she has promised."

"Oh!" cried Martial suddenly, rising from his seat, "I do not know what we are thinking about."

"What is it?"

"This girl is below, dying, perhaps; and instead of helping her, we are here."

"Be satisfied, François and Amandine are with her; they would have called us if there had been any danger. But you are right; let us go to her; you must see her, she to whom, perhaps, we shall owe our happiness." And Martial, leaning on the arm of La Louve, descended the stairs.

Before they enter the kitchen, we will relate what passed since Fleur de Marie had been confided to the care of the children.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DOCTOR GRIFFON.

FRANCOIS and Amandine had just carried Fleur de Marie into the kitchen near the fire, when Saint Rémy and Dr. Griffon, who had crossed over in Nicholas's boat, entered the house. While the children stirred up the fire and threw on some dry faggots, which, soon kindling, gave out a cheerful blaze, Dr. Griffon exercised all his skill to restore the girl.

"The poor child is hardly seventeen," cried the count, profoundly affected; then turning towards the doctor, he said, "Well, what do you think, my friend?"

"I can hardly feel the pulse; but, what is very singular, the skin of the face is not coloured blue in this subject, as is ordinarily the case in asphyxia from submersion," answered the doctor with imperturbable coolness, looking at Fleur de Marie with an air profoundly meditative.

Dr. Griffon was a tall, thin man, very pale, and completely bald, except two very scanty tufts of black hair, most carefully gathered from behind, and laid flat on his forehead; his face, wrinkled and furrowed by hard study, expressed intelligence, reflection, and coldness.

Of immense knowledge, of consummate experience, a skilful and renowned practitioner, principal physician of a large hospital, Dr. Griffon had but one defect—that of making, if we may so express it, a complete oversight of the patient, and only attending to the disease: young or old, male or female, rich or poor, no matter; he thought only of the medical fact, more or less curious or interesting in a scientific point of view, which the *subject* offered.

For him there only existed *subjects*.

"What a charming face! How handsome she is, notwithstanding this frightful pallor!" said Saint Remy, contemplating Fleur de Marie with sadness. "Have you ever seen, my dear doctor, features more regular or more lovely? And so young—so young!"

"The age is nothing," said the physician, roughly; "no more than the presence of water in the lungs, which formerly was thought to be mortal. They were most grossly deceived; the admirable experiments of Goodwin, of the famous Goodwin, have proved it."

"But, doctor"—

"But it is a fact," answered M. Griffon, absorbed by the love of his art. "To ascertain the presence of a foreign liquid in the lungs, Goodwin plunged some cats and dogs into a tub of ink for some seconds, drew them out living, and dissected my gentlemen some time afterward. Well, he convinced himself that the ink had penetrated into the lungs, and that the presence of liquid in the organs of respiration does not cause death."

The count knew the physician to be an excellent man at heart, but that his frenzied passion for the sciences often made him appear hard-hearted and almost cruel.

"Have you, at least, any hope?" asked he, with impatience.

"The extremities of the subject are very cold," said the doctor; "there is but little hope."

"Oh, to die at her age, poor child—it is frightful!"

"The pupil fixed, dilated," answered the immovable docter, raising with his finger the lifeless eyelid of Fleur de Marie.

"Strange man," cried the count, almost with indignation; "one would think you without feeling; and yet I have seen you watch by my bedside night after night. If I had been your brother, you could not have been more devoted."

The doctor, quite occupied in administering to Fleur de Marie, answered the count, without looking at him, and with settled calmness, "Do you believe that one meets every day with such a malignant fever, so marvellously complicated, so curious to study, as the one you had? It was admirable, my good friend, admirable! Stupor, delirium, twitchings of the sinews, syncopes—your deadly fever united the most varied symp-

toms. Your constitution was also a rare thing, very rare, and eminently interesting; you were also affected, in a partial and momentary manner, with paralysis. If it were only for this fact, your disease had a right to all my attention; you presented to me a magnificent study; for, frankly, my dear friend, all I desire in this world is to come across just such another fine case—but one has no such luck twice."

The count shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

It was at this moment that Martial descended, leaning on the arm of La Louve, who had, as the reader knows, thrown over her wet clothes a plaid cloak belonging to Calabash.

Struck with the pale looks of the lover of La Louve, and remarking his hands covered with coagulated blood, the count cried, "Who is this man?"

"*My husband!*" answered La Louve, looking at Martial with an expression of happiness and noble pride impossible to describe.

"You have a good, intrepid wife, sir," said the count to him. "I saw her save this unfortunate child with rare courage."

"Oh, yes, sir; good and intrepid is *my wife!*" answered Martial, dwelling on the last words, and looking at La Louve in his turn with an air at once tender and affectionate. "Yes, intrepid; for she also saved my life!"

"Yours?" said the astonished count.

"See his hands, his poor hands!" said La Louve, wiping the tears which softened the indignant sparkling of her eyes.

"Oh, this is horrible!" cried the count. "This poor fellow has had his hands literally chopped at. Look, doctor!"

Turning his head slightly, and looking over his shoulder at the numerous wounds which Calabash had made, the doctor said, "Open and shut your hand."

Martial executed this movement with much pain.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders, continued to occupy himself with Fleur de Marie, and said disdainfully, and as if with regret, "Those wounds are absolutely nothing serious. None of the tendons are injured; in a week the subject can use his hands."

"Then, sir, my husband will not be a cripple?" cried La Louve, with gratitude.

The doctor shook his head.

"And La Goualeuse will live, will she not?" asked La Louve. "Oh, she must live, my husband and I owe her so much!" Then turning towards Martial, "Poor little thing! There is she of whom I spoke—she who perhaps will be the cause of our happiness—she who gave me the idea of telling you all I have said. See what chance has done that I should save her—and here too!"

"She is our Providence!" said Martial, struck with the beauty of La Goualeuse.

"What an angelic face! Oh, she will live! will she not, doctor?"

"I don't know," answered the physician; "but, in the first place, she ought to remain here. Can she have the necessary attentions?"

"Here!" cried La Louve. "Why they murder here!"

"Hush, hush!" said Martial.

The count and doctor looked at La Louve with surprise.

"This house has a bad reputation; it surprises me the less," whispered the physician to Saint Rémy.

"You have, then, been the victim of violence?" asked the count. "Who wounded you in this manner?"

"It is nothing, sir. I had a dispute here, a fight ensued, and I have been wounded. But this girl cannot remain in the house," added he, in a gloomy manner. "I shall not remain myself, neither my wife, nor my brother, nor my sister. We leave the island never to return."

"Oh, what joy!" cried both the children.

"Then what must we do?" said the doctor, regarding Fleur de Marie. "It is impossible to think of transporting this subject in this state of prostration. Yet, happily, my house is close at hand, and my gardener's wife and daughter will make excellent nurses. Since this asphyxia from submersion interests you, you can overlook her attendants, my dear Saint Rémy, and I will come and see her every day."

"And you play the part of a hard-hearted, unmerciful man," cried the count, "when you have a most generous heart, as this proposition proves."

"If the subject sinks, as is possible, there will be a most interesting autopsy, which will allow me to confirm once more the assertions of Goodwin."

"What you say is frightful!" said the count.

"For him who knows how to read it, the human body is a book where one learns to save the life of the sick," said Dr. Griffon, stoically.

"However, you do good," said Saint Rémy, bitterly; "that is the important thing. What matters the cause, as long as the benefit exists? Poor child, the more I look at her, the more she interests me."

"And she deserves it, sir," cried La Louve, passionately, drawing near.

"You know her?" said the count.

"Know her, sir? To her I owe the happiness of my life; in saving her I have not done as much for her as she has done for me."

"And who is she?" asked the count.

"An angel, sir; all that is good in the world. Yes, although she is dressed as a peasant girl, there is not a grand lady who can talk as well as she can, with her soft little voice, just like music. She is a noble girl, and courageous and good."

"How did she fall in the water?"

"I do not know, sir."

"She is not a peasant girl, then?" asked the count.

"A peasant girl! Look at her small white hands, sir?"

"It is true," said Saint Rémy. "What a singular mystery! But her name, her family?"

"Come," said the doctor, interrupting the conversation, "the subject must be carried to the boat."

Half-an-hour afterwards, Fleur de Marie, who had not yet recovered her senses, was taken to the physician's house, placed in a warm bed, and maternally watched by the gardener's wife, assisted by La Louve. The doctor promised Saint Rémy, who was more and more interested in La Goualeuse, to return the same evening to visit her.

Martial went to Paris with François and Amandine, La Louve not being willing to leave Fleur de Marie until she was out of danger.

The island remained deserted. We shall soon meet with its wretched occupants at Bras-Rouge's, where they had agreed to meet La Chouette, to murder the diamond dealer.

In the meanwhile, we will conduct the reader to the assignation that Tom, the brother of Countess Macgregor, had given to the horrible old woman, the Schoolmaster's accomplice.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE LIKENESS.

THOMAS SEYTON walked impatiently up and down on one of the boulevards near the Observatory, till he saw La Chouette appear.

The old wretch had on a white cap, and was wrapped up in a large red plaid shawl: the point of a very sharp dagger stuck through the bottom of the straw basket, which she carried on her arm; but Tom did not perceive it.

"Three o'clock is striking from the Luxembourg," said the old woman. "I am punctual, I think?"

"Come," answered Seyton; and walking before her, he crossed some waste ground, entered a deserted street situated near the Rue Cassini, stopped about the middle of the passage, where it was obstructed by a turnstile, opened a small gate, made a sign for La Chouette to follow him, and, after having taken a few steps in an alley shaded with large trees, said, "Wait here," and disappeared.

"I hope he won't make me lose too much time," said La Chouette; "I must be at Bras-Rouge's at five, to settle the broker. Ah! speaking of that, my scoundrelly needle has his nose out of the window," added the old woman, seeing the point of the dagger sticking through the basket. "So much for not having put on his cap." And taking it from the basket, she placed it in such a manner that it was completely concealed.

"It is a tool of my man's," said she. "Did he not ask me for it to kill the rats, which come and laugh at him in his cellar? Poor beasts!—not for him. They have only the old blind man to divert them, and keep them company! The least they can do is to nibble him a little. Hence I don't wish him to do any harm to the small deer, and I keep the tickler. Besides, I shall soon want it for the broker, perhaps. Thirty thousand francs' worth of diamonds—a treasure for each of us! A good day's work; not like the other day; That fool of a notary, whom I wanted to pluck—I did threaten him, if he would not give me money, to inform that it was his housekeeper who gave me La Goualeuse, through Tournemine, when she was quite small; but nothing frightens him. He called me an old liar, and turned me out of doors. Good, good! I will have a letter written to those people at the farm, where Pegriotte was sent, and inform them it was the notary who abandoned her. They know, perhaps, her family, and when she leaves Saint Lazare, it will be hot work for this hound of a Ferrand. But some one comes—a little pale lady whom I have seen before," added La Chouette, seeing Sarah appear at the other end of the alley. "Some more business to be done; it must be on account of this little lady that we carried La Goualeuse away from the farm. If she pays well for anything new, I'm on it, safe!"

On approaching La Chouette, whom she saw for the first time since a previous meeting, the countenance of Sarah expressed that disdain which people of a certain class feel when they are obliged to come in contact with wretches whom they use as instruments or accomplices.

Seyton, who until now, had actively assisted the criminal machinations of his sister, considering them useless, had refused to continue this miserable game, consenting, nevertheless, to grant his sister, for the last time, an interview with La Chouette, without wishing to take part in any new schemes.

Having been unable to bring Rudolph back to her by breaking the ties which she thought dear to him, the countess hoped, as we have said, to render him the dupe of an infamous trick, the success of which might realise the dream of this opinionated, ambitious, and cruel woman. It was in contemplation to persuade Rudolph that the daughter, whom he had supposed dead, was alive, and to substitute some orphan in the place of his daughter.

The reader knows that Jacques Ferrand, having formally refused to enter into this plot, in spite of Sarah's threats, had resolved to make way with Fleur de Marie, as much from dread of the revelations of La Chouette, as from fear of the countess. But she had

not renounced her designs, for she was almost certain of corrupting or intimidating the notary, when she had secured a girl capable of playing the part designed for her.

After a moment's silence, Sarah said to La Chouette, "Are you adroit, discreet, and resolute?"

"Adroit as a monkey, resolute as a dog, dumb as a fish, there's La Chouette, just as the devil has made her, ready to serve you, if she is capable—and she is rather," answered the hag in a lively manner. "I hope we have famously decoyed the young country girl, who is safely fastened up in Saint Lazare for two good months."

"The question is no longer of her, but of other things."

"As you wish, my little lady. As long as there is money at the end of what you are about to propose, we shall be like two fingers of a hand."

Sarah could not suppress a movement of disgust. "You must know," said she, "some common people—some unfortunate family."

"There are more of them than millionaires; plenty to pick from; there is much rich misery in Paris."

"You must find for me a young orphan girl, one who lost her parents very early. She must be of an agreeable face, of a sweet temper, and not more than seventeen."

La Chouette looked at Sarah with astonishment.

"Such an orphan cannot be difficult to find," resumed the countess; "there are so many foundlings."

"My little lady, have you not forgotten La Goualeuse? Just what you want."

"Whom do you mean by La Goualeuse?"

"The young person whom we carried off from Bouqueval."

"I tell you, we have nothing to do with her!"

"But listen to me, then; and above all, reward me with good advice: you wish an orphan, as gentle as a lamb, beautiful as day, and not seventeen."

"Without doubt."

"Well, then, take La Goualeuse when she comes out of Saint Lazare; just what you want—as if made to order; for she was only six years old when Jacques Ferrand (about ten years ago) gave her to me, with a thousand francs, to get rid of her. It was a man named Tournemine, now in the galleys at Rochefort, who brought her to me, saying, that she was doubtless a child they wanted to get rid of, or pass for dead."

"Jacques Ferrand, say you!" cried Sarah, in a voice so changed that La Chouette stepped back with alarm. "The notary, Jacques Ferrand," repeated she, "gave you this child, and"— she could not finish. Her emotion was too violent; with her hands stretched towards La Chouette, trembling violently, surprise and joy were expressed on her countenance.

"But I did not know you were going to fire up in this manner, my little lady," said the old woman. "Yet it is very plain. Ten years ago, an old acquaintance, Tournemine, said to me, 'Do you wish to take charge of a little girl that some one wants to get rid of? If she lives or dies, all the same; there is a thousand francs to gain; you may do with the child what you please.'"

"Ten years ago?" cried Sarah.

"Ten years."

"Fair?"

"Fair."

"With blue eyes?"

"With blue eyes, blue as blue-bells."

"And it is she, who, at the farm"—

"We packed up for Saint Lazare. I must say that I did not expect to find her there."

"Oh! heaven!" cried Sarah, falling on her knees, and raising her hands and eyes towards heaven; "your ways are impenetrable. I bow before mysterious Providence. Oh! if such happiness were possible—but no, I cannot believe it; it would be too much—no!" Then suddenly rising, she said to La Chouette, who looked at her with amazement, "Come."

She walked before the hag with hurried steps. At the end of the alley, she ascended some steps leading to the glass-door of a cabinet, sumptuously furnished.

At the moment when La Chouette was about to enter, Sarah made her a sign to remain without. Then she rung the bell violently. A servant appeared.

"I am not at home to anyone—let no one in; do you understand? absolutely no one."

The domestic retired, and to be more secure the lady locked the door.

La Chouette heard the orders given to the servant, and saw Sarah lock the door. The countess, turning to her said, "Come in quickly, and shut the door."

La Chouette obeyed.

Hastily opening a secretary, Sarah took from it an ebony casket, which she placed on a desk in the middle of the room, and made a sign for La Chouette to come near her.

The casket contained many jewel-boxes place done on the other, inclosing magnificent ornaments.

Sarah was so impatient to reach the bottom of the casket, that she threw out on the table the boxes, splendidly furnished with necklaces, bracelets, and diadems, where rubies, emeralds, and diamonds sparkled with a thousand fires. La Chouette was astounded. She was armed, she was shut up alone with the countess, her flight was easy, secure. An infernal idea crossed the mind of this monster. But to execute this new misdeed, she had to get her poigniard from the basket, and draw near to Sarah, without exciting her suspicions.

With the cunning of a tiger-cat, who crawls treacherously on its prey, the old woman profited by the pre-occupation of the countess to steal round the bureau which

separated her from her victim. She had already commenced this treacherous evolution, when she was obliged to stop suddenly. Sarah drew a medallion from the bottom of the box, leaned on the table, handed it to La Chouette with a trembling hand, and said, "Look at this portrait."

"It is La Pegriotte!" cried La Chouette, struck with the great likeness; "the little girl who was given to me; I see her as she was when Tournemine brought her to me. There is her thick curly hair which I cut off at once, and sold well, ma foi!"

"You recognise her? Oh! I conjure you do not deceive me!"

"I tell you, my little lady, that it is La Pegriotte; it is as if I could see her before me," said La Chouette, trying to approach Sarah without being remarked; "even now she looks like this portrait. If you saw her, you would be struck with it."

Sarah had experienced no sorrow, no fright on learning that her child had, during ten years, lived miserable and abandoned. No remorse on thinking that she herself had torn her from the peaceful retreat where Rudolph had placed her. This unnatural mother did not at once interrogate La Chouette with terrible anxiety as to the past life of her child. No; ambition with Sarah had for a long time stifled maternal tenderness.

It was not joy at finding her daughter which transported her, it was the certain hope of seeing realised the proud dream of all her life. Rudolph was interested for this unfortunate creature, had protected without knowing her, what would be his joy when he discovered her to be his child! He was single, the countess a widow—Sarah already saw glisten before her eyes a sovereign's crown. La Chouette, still advancing with cautious steps, had already reached one end of the table, and placed her dagger perpendicularly in her basket, the handle close to the opening, quite ready. She was only a few steps from the countess, when the latter suddenly said, "Do you know how to write?"

And pushing back with her hand the boxes and jewels, she opened a blotter placed before an inkstand.

"No, madam, I cannot write," answered La Chouette at all hazard.

"I am going to write then, from your dictation. Tell me all the circumstances attending the abandonment of this little girl." And Sarah, seating herself in an arm-chair before the desk, took a pen and made a motion for the old woman to draw near to her.

The eyes of La Chouette twinkled. At length she was standing erect alongside of Sarah's seat. She, bending over the table, prepared to write.

"I will read aloud slowly," said the countess, "you will correct my mistakes."

"Yes, madam," answered La Chouette, watching [illegible] movement.

Then she slipped her right hand into her basket, so as to take hold of the dagger without being seen.

The lady began to write:

"I declare that"—

But interrupting herself, and turning towards La Chouette, who already had hold of the handle of her dagger, Sarah added, "At what time was this child delivered to you?"

"In the month of February, 1827."

"By whom?" asked Sarah, with her face still turned toward La Chouette.

"By Pierre Tournemine, now in the galleys at Rochefort. Mrs. Seraphin, housekeeper of the notary, gave the little girl to him."

The countess turned to write and read in a loud voice: "I declare that in the month of February, 1827, a man named"—

La Chouette had drawn out the dagger.

Already she raised it to strike her victim between the shoulders. Sarah again turned.

La Chouette, not to be discovered, placed quickly her right arm on the back of the chair, and leaned towards her to answer her new question.

"I have forgotten the name of the man who confided the child to you."

"Pierre Tournemine," answered La Chouette.

"Pierre Tournemine," repeated Sarah, continuing to write—"now in the galley at Rochefort, placed in my hands a child who had been confided to him by the housekeeper of"—

The countess could not finish.

La Chouette, after having softly disencumbered herself of the basket by dropping it on the ground, had thrown herself on the countess with as much rapidity as fury; with her left hand she caught her by the throat, and, holding her face down to the table, she had, with her right hand, planted the dagger between the shoulders.

This horrible deed was executed so quickly that the countess did not utter a single cry or groan. Still seated, she remained with her face on the table. The pen had fallen from her hand.

"The same blow as Fourline gave the little old man in the Rue du Roule," said the monster. "Another one who will talk no more—her account is made."

And gathering in haste the jewels, which she threw into her basket, she did not perceive that her victim still breathed.

The murder and robbery accomplished, the horrible old woman opened the glass-door, disappeared rapidly in the green alley, went out by the small door, and reached the waste ground. Near the Observatory, she took a cab, which conveyed her to Bras-Rouge. Widow Martial, Nicholas, Calabash, and Barbillon had, as the reader knows, made an appointment to meet La Chouette in this den, to rob and kill the diamond broker.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE DETECTIVE.

THE "Bleeding Heart Tavern" was situated on the Champs Elysées, near the Cours la Reine, in one of the vast moats which bounded this promenade some years since. The inhabitants of the island had not yet appeared. Since the departure of Bradamanté, who had accompanied the stepmother of Madam d'Harville to Normandy, Tortillard had returned to his father's house.

Placed as look-out on the top of the staircase leading down to the inn, the little cripple was to notify the arrival of Martial by a concerted signal. Bras-Rouge being then in secret conference with Narcisse Borel, a police officer.

This man, about forty years, strong and thickset, had his skin stained, a sharp and piercing eye, and face completely shaved, so as to be able to assume the different disguises necessary to his dangerous expeditions; for it was often necessary for him to unite the sudden transformations of a comedian with the energy and courage of the soldier, to surprise certain bandits whom he was obliged to match in courage and determination. Narcisse Borel was, in a word, one of the most useful, the most active instruments of the providence, on a small scale, modestly and vulgarly called the police.

Let us return to the interview between Borel and Bras-Rouge. Their conversation seemed very animated.

"Yes," said the plain-clothes constable, "you are accused of profiting by your position in a double manner, by taking part with impunity in the robberies of a band of very dangerous malefactors, and of giving false information concerning them to the police. Take care, Bras-Rouge; if this should be proved, they would have no mercy on you."

"Alas! I know I am accused of this; and it is afflicting, my good M. Narcisse," replied Bras-Rouge, giving to his weasel face an expression of hypocritical sorrow. "But I hope that to-day they will render me justice, and that my good faith will be certainly acknowledged."

"We shall see."

"How can I be suspected? Have I not given proofs? Was it not I—yes or no—who, in time past secured you Ambrose Martial, one of the most dangerous malefactors in Paris? For, as it is said, that runs in his race, and the Martials come from below, where they will soon return."

"All this is very fine; but Ambrose was informed that he was about to be arrested; if I had not advanced the hour indicated by you, he would have escaped."

"Do you believe me capable, M. Narcisse, of having secretly given him information of your intentions?"

"All I know is, that I received a pistol shot from the rascal, which, very fortunately, only went through my arm."

"Marry, M. Narcisse, it is very certain that in your calling one is exposed to such mistakes."

"Oh! you call that a mistake?"

"Certainly; for doubtless the scoundrel wanted to plant the ball in your body."

"In the arms, body, or head, no matter; it is not of that I complain: every trade has its offsets."

"And its pleasures also, M. Narcisse; and its pleasures! For instance, when a man as cunning, as adroit, as courageous as you are, is for a long time on the tracks of a nest of robbers; follows them from place to place—from house to house, with a good bloodhound like your servant Bras-Rouge, and he succeeds in getting them into a trap, from which not one can escape, acknowledge, M. Narcisse, that there is great pleasure in it—a huntsman's joy—without counting the service rendered to justice," added the landlord of the "Bleeding Heart."

"I should be of your opinion, if the bloodhound was faithful, but I am afraid he is not."

"Oh! M. Narcisse, can you think"—

"I think that instead of putting us on the scent, you amuse yourself by deceiving us, and you abuse the confidence placed in you. Every day you promise to aid us to place our hands on the band; that day never comes."

'What if this day comes to-day, M. Narcisse, as I am sure it will; and if I let you pick up Barbillon, Nicholas Martial, the widow, her daughter, and La Chouette, will it be a good haul or not? Will you still suspect me?"

"No; and you will have rendered real service; for we have against this band strong presumptions, almost certain suspicions, but, unfortunately, no proofs."

"Hold a moment—caught in the very act, allowing you do nab them so, will aid furiously to display their cards, M. Narcisse?"

"Doubtless; and you assure me you are not in the plant they have on hand?"

"No, on my honour! It is La Chouette who came and proposed to me to entice the broker here, when she learned through my son, that Morel, the lapidary, who lived in the Rue du Temple, cut real instead of false stones, and that Mother Mathieu had often about her jewels of value. I accepted the affair, proposing for La Chouette to add Barbillon and the Martials, so as to have the whole gang in hand."

"And what of the Schoolmaster, this man so dangerous, so strong, and so ferocious, who was always with La Chouette? one of the old hands of the Lapin Blanc?"

"The Schoolmaster?" said Bras-Rouge, feigning astonishment.

"Yes, a galley-slave escaped from Rochefort, named Anselme Duresnal, condemned for life. He has disfigured himself so as not

to be recognised. Have you no information of him?"

"None," answered Bras-Rouge, intrepidly, who had his reasons for this falsehood, for the Schoolmaster was then shut up in one of the cellars of the tavern.

"There is every reason to believe that the Schoolmaster is the author of some late murders. It would be an important capture. For six weeks past, no one knows what has become of him."

"Thus we are reproached for having lost sight of him. Always reproaches, M. Narcisse! always."

"Not without reason. How's your smuggling?"

"Must I not know all sorts of folks, smugglers as well as anybody else, to put you on the scent? I informed you of the pipe which, beginning outside of the Barrière du Trône, ended in a house in the street, to introduce untaxed liquor."

"I know all that," said Narcisse, interrupting Bras-Rouge; "but for one you denounce, you let, perhaps, ten escape, and you continue your trade with impunity. I am sure you feed out of two mangers, as the saying is."

"Oh! M. Narcisse, I am incapable of such dishonest hunger."

"And this is not all. In the Rue du Temple, No. 17, lives one Burette, pawnbroker, who is accused of being your private receiver."

"What would you have me do, M. Borel? one says so many things, the world is so wicked. Once more I say, I must mix with the greatest number of scoundrels possible. I must even do as they do, worse than they, to avoid suspicions; but it cuts me to the heart to imitate them—to the heart—I must be well devoted to the service to follow such a trade."

"Poor dear man! I pity you with all my heart."

"You laugh, M. Borel. But if all these stories are believed, why do they not pay Mother Burette and myself a visit?"

"You know well why—not to startle these bandits whom you have for so long a time promised to deliver to us."

"And I am going to deliver them to you, M. Narcisse; in one hour's time you shall have them bound, and without much trouble, for there are three women. Barbillon and Nicholas Martial are as ferocious as tigers, but cowardly as chickens."

"Tigers or chickens," said Borel, opening his long riding coat and showing the butt-ends of two pistols, which stuck out of his trousers pockets, "I have something here to serve them."

"You will do well to take two of your men with you, M. Borel; when they find themselves cornered, the greatest cowards become sometimes tigers."

"I will place two of my men in the little lower room, alongside of the one where you will put the broker. At the first cry, I will appear at one door, my two men at the other."

"You must make haste, for the band may arrive any moment, M. Borel."

"So be it; I go to place my men. I hope it will not be for nothing this time."

The conversation was interrupted by the concerted signal. Bras-Rouge looked out of a window to see whom Tortillard announced.

"Look! here is La Chouette already! Well! do you believe me now, M. Narcisse?"

"This is something, but not all; we shall see. I go to place my men."

The detective disappeared through a side door.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

SCREECH-OWL.

HER rapidity of step, the ferocious ardour of a desire for rapine and murder which she still possessed, had flushed her hideous visage; her one green eye sparkled with savage joy.

Tortillard followed her, jumping and limping. Just as she was descending the last steps of the stairs, the son of Bras-Rouge, through a wicked frolic, placed his foot on the trailing folds of La Chouette's dress. This caused the old woman to stumble; not being able to catch hold of the balusters, she fell on her knees, her hands both stretched out, abandoning her precious basket, from whence escaped a golden bracelet set with diamonds and fine pearls. La Chouette, having, in her fall, excoriated her fingers a little, picked up the bracelet, which had not escaped the quick eyesight of Tortillard, rose and threw herself furiously on the little cripple, who approached her with a hypocritical air, saying,

"Oh! bless us! your foot slipped!"

Without answering, La Chouette seized him by the hair, and, stooping down, bit him in the cheek; the blood spirted from the wound. Strange as it may appear, Tortillard, notwithstanding his wickedness and the great pain he endured, uttered not a complaint nor cry. He wiped his bleeding face, and said, with a forced laugh,

"I would rather you would not kiss me so hard another time, La Chouette."

"Wicked little devil, why did you step on my gown to make me fall?"

"I? Oh, now! I swear to you that I did not do it on purpose, my good Chouette; as if your little Tortillard would wish to hurt you; he loves you too well for that. You did well to beat him, affront him, bite him; he is attached to you like a poor little dog to his master," said the child, in a caressing and coaxing voice.

Deceived by the hypocrisy, La Chouette answered, "Very well! if I have bitten you wrongfully, it shall be punishment for some

other time, when you have deserved it. Come, to-day I bear no malice. Where is your cheat of a father?"

"In the house; shall I call him?"

"No; have the Martials come yet?"

"Not yet."

"Then I have time to go and see my man; I want to speak to old No-eyes."

"Are you going to the cellar?" asked Tortillard, hardly concealing his diabolical joy

"What is that to you?"

"To me?"

"Yes; you asked me that in such a droll way."

"Because I thought of something funny."

"What?"

"That you must have brought a pack of cards along to amuse him," answered Tortillard, in a cunning manner; "it will be a little change for him; he only plays at biting with the rats; in that game he always wins, and in the end it tires him."

La Chouette laughed violently at this witticism, and said to the little cripple, "Mamma's little monkey. I do not know a blackguard that is more wicked than you are. You little rogue, go, get me a candle; you shall light me down, help me to open his door; you know that I can't move it alone."

"Oh, no, it is too dark in the cellar," said Tortillard, shaking his head.

"How? you, as wicked as the devil, a coward; I would like to see that! Come, go quick, and say to your father, I will soon return; that I am with my pet; that we are talking about the publication of our banns of marriage," added the monster, chuckling. "Come, make haste, you shall be groomsman, and if you are a good boy, you shall have my garter."

Tortillard went to get a light, and La Chouette, elated with the success of her robbery, amused herself while he was gone, in handling the precious jewels in her basket. It was to conceal temporarily this treasure that she wished to visit the Schoolmaster in his cellar, and not to torment, as was her usual custom, her victim. We will mention presently why, with the consent of Bras-Rouge, La Chouette had confined the Schoolmaster in the subterranean hole.

Tortillard, holding a light, reappeared at the cellar door. La Chouette followed him to the lower room, into which opened the large trap-door already described.

The son of Bras-Rouge, protecting his light with the hollow of his hand, and preceding the old woman, descended slowly a flight of steep stone steps, leading to the entrance of the cellar.

Arrived at the foot, Tortillard appeared to hesitate about following La Chouette.

"Well! lazy-bones, go on," said she, turning round.

"It is so dark, and besides, you go so fast, La Chouette; I'd rather go back, and leave you the candle."

"And the door, imbecile? Can I open it alone? Will you go on?"

"No, I am too much afraid."

"If I come to you, take care."

"Oh, now you threaten me, I'll go back."

And he retreated a few steps.

"Well! listen; be a good boy," answered La Chouette, restraining her anger, "I will give you something."

"Very well," said the boy, drawing near; "speak so to me, and you will make me do all you can wish, Mother Chouette."

"Look alive, I am in a hurry."

"Yes; but promise that you will let me torment the Schoolmaster."

"Some other day; now I have no time."

"Only a little; just to make him foam."

"Some other time, I say; I must return at once."

"Why, then, do you open the door of his prison?"

"None of your business. Come, now, will you finish? The Martials, perhaps, are already above; I want to speak to them. Be a good boy, and you shan't be sorry; go on."

"I must love you well, La Chouette, for you can make me do just as you please," said Tortillard, advancing slowly. The trembling, sickly light of the candle, only made darkness visible in this gloomy passage, reflecting the black shadow of the hideous boy on the green and crumbling walls streaming with humidity.

At the end of the passage, through the obscurity, could be perceived the low, broken arch of the entrance to the cellar, its heavy door secured with bands of iron, and contrasting strongly in the shade, with the plaid shawl and white bonnet of La Chouette.

With their united efforts, the door opened, creaking on its rusty hinges. A puff of humid vapour escaped from this hole, which was as dark as night.

The candle, placed on the ground, cast a ray of light on the first steps of the stone staircase, while the lower part was lost in total obscurity.

A cry, or rather a savage howl, came up from the depths of the cellar.

"Oh! there is my darling, who says 'good day' to his mamma," said La Chouette, ironically; and she descended a few steps to conceal her prize in some corner.

"I am hungry!" cried the Schoolmaster, in a voice trembling with rage; "do you mean I am to die here like a mad beast?"

"You are hungry, poor puss!" said La Chouette, shouting with laughter. "Well, suck your thumb!"

The noise of a chain shaken violently was heard; then a sigh of restrained rage.

"Take care! take care! you will hurt your leg, poor dear papa!" said Tortillard.

"The child is right; keep quiet, old pal," said the old woman; "the chain and rings are strong, old No-eyes; they come from old Micou, who only sells first-rate articles. It is your own fault; for why did you allow

yourself to be tied when you were asleep? Afterward, there was nothing to be done but to slip on the chain, and bring you down here, in this nice cool place, to preserve you, my sweet!"

"Its a shame—he'll grow mouldy," said Tortillard.

The chains were heard rattling anew.

"Oh, oh! he jumps like a ladybird, tied by the paw," cried the old woman. "I think I can see him."

"Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home! your house is on fire, and the Schoolmaster is burning!" chanted Tortillard.

This variation augmented the hilarity of La Chouette. Having placed her basket in a hole under one of the steps, she said, "Look here, my man?"

"He does not see," answered Tortillard.

"The boy is right. Ah, well! Do you hear? You should not have hindered me, when we returned from the farm, from washing Pegriotte's face with vitriol. You should not have played the good dog, simpleton. And then, to talk of your conscience, which was becoming prudish. I saw that your cake was all dough; that some day or other you might peach, Mister Eyeless, and then"—

"Old No-eyes will nip you, Screech Owl, for he is hungry," cried Tortillard, suddenly pushing, with all his strength, the old woman by the back.

La Chouette fell forward, uttering a dreadful imprecation, and rolled to the foot of the steps.

"Lick 'em, Towser! La Chouette is yours! Jump on her, old man," added Tortillard.

Then seizing hold of the basket, which he had seen the old woman hide, he ran up the stairs precipitately, crying with savage joy, "There is a push worth double what I gave you a while ago, La Chouette! This time you can't bite me. Oh! you thought I didn't care; thank you, I bleed still."

"I have her, oh, I have her!" cried the Schoolmaster from the depths of the cellar.

"If you have her, old man, fair play," said the boy, chuckling; as he stopped on the top step of the staircase.

"Help!" cried La Chouette, in a strangled voice.

"Thank you, Tortillard," answered the Schoolmaster; "thank you," and he uttered an aspiration of fearful joy. "Oh! I pardon you the harm you have done me, and to reward you, you shall hear La Chouette sing! Listen to the bird of death"—

"Bravo, bravo! here am I in the dress circle, private box," said Tortillard, seating himself at the top of the stairs. He raised the light to endeavour to see what was going on in the cellar, but the darkness was too great; so faint a light could not dissipate it. Bras-Rouge's hopeful could distinguish nothing. The struggle between the Schoolmaster and La Chouette was silent and furious, without a word, without a cry. Only, from time to time, could be heard a hard breathing or suffocating respiration, which always accompanies violent and continued struggles.

Tortillard, seated on the stone step, began to stamp his feet in the manner peculiar to spectators anxious for the commencement of a play; then he uttered the familiar cry of the "gods" in the penny-gaffs. "Hoist that rag! trot 'em out! Begin, begin! Music, music!"

"Oh! I have you as I wish," murmured the Schoolmaster from the bottom of the cellar, "and you shall"—

A desperate movement of La Chouette interrupted him. She struggled with that energy which is caused by the fear of death.

"Speak up, we can't hear," cried Tortillard.

"You have a fine chance in my hand. I have you as I wish to have you," continued the Schoolmaster. Then, having doubtless succeeded in holding La Chouette, he added, "That's it. Now listen"—

"Tortillard, call your father!" cried La Chouette, in a breathless, exhausted tone. "Help, help!"

"Turn out that old woman! turn her out! We can't hear," said the little cripple, screaming with laughter. "Silence! out with her!"

The cries of La Chouette could not reach the upper apartments. The wretch, seeing she had no aid to expect from the son of Bras-Rouge, tried a last effort.

"Tortillard, go for help; and I will give you my basket, it is full of jewels. It is there under a stone."

"How generous you are! Thank you, ma'am! Don't you know that I have your swag? Hold, don't you hear it jingle?" said Tortillard, shaking it. "But give me two sous to buy some hot cake, and I'll go seek papa!"

"Have pity on me, and I"— La Chouette could not proceed. Again there was a pause.

The little cripple recommenced the stamping of his feet, and cried, "Why don't you begin? Up with the curtain! Go ahead, will you, now? Music, music!"

"La Chouette, you can no longer deafen me with your cries," said the Schoolmaster, after some minutes, during which he had succeeded in gagging the old woman. "You know well," resumed he, in a slow and hollow tone, "that I do not wish to finish you at once. Torture for torture. You have made me suffer enough. I must talk to you a long time before I kill you—yes, a long time. It will be frightful for you! What agony!"

"Come, none of your nonsense, old man," cried Tortillard, half-rising. "Correct her; but do not hurt her. You speak of killing her; its only a joke, is it not? I like my Chouette. I have lent her to you, but you must return her to me. Don't damage her. I will not have anyone harm my Chouette, or I will go and call papa."

"Be not alarmed; she shall only have what

she deserves—a profitable lesson," said the robber, to reassure Tortillard, fearing that the cripple would go for help.

"Very good! bravo! Now the play begins," said the boy, who did not believe that the Schoolmaster seriously meditated to destroy La Chouette.

"Let us talk a little," resumed the Schoolmaster, in a calm voice, to the old woman. "In the first place, since a dream I had at the farm of Bouqueval, which brought before my eyes all our crimes, which almost made me mad, which will make me mad—for in the solitude and profound state of isolation in which I live, all my thoughts, in spite of myself, tend towards this dream—a strange change has taken place within me. Yes, I have thought with horror of my past wickedness. In the first place, I did not allow you to disfigure the Goualeuse. That was nothing. By chaining me here in this cave, by making me suffer cold and hunger, but by deliverng me from your provocation, you have left me alone to all the horrors of my thoughts. Oh! you do not know what it is to be alone, always alone, with a black veil over the eyes, as the implacable man said who punished me." (This was Rudolph who had had him blinded.) "It is fearful! See now! In this cellar I wished to kill him, but this cellar is the place of my punishment. It will be perhaps my grave!

"I repeat to you, this is frightful. All that that man predicted is realised. He told me: 'You have abused your strength: you shall be the plaything of the weakest.' This has been. He told me: 'Henceforth, separated from the exterior world, face to face with the eternal remembrance of your crimes, one day you will repent them.' That day has arrived; solitude has confirmed it. I could not have thought it possible. Another proof that I am, perhaps, less wicked than formerly, is, that I experience an indescribable joy in holding you there, monster, not to avenge myself, but to avenge our victims. Yes, I shall have accomplished a duty, when, with my own hand, I shall have punished my accomplice. A voice tells me, that if you had fallen sooner into my power, much blood might have been spared. I feel now a horror of my past murders, and yet, strange! it is without fear, it is with security that I intend to execute on you a frightful murder, with horrible refinement of cruelty. Speak, speak! can you realise this?"

"Bravo, bravo! well played, first old man. You warm up," cried Tortillard, applauding. "This is only a joke, though?"

"Only a joke!" answered the Schoolmaster, in a hollow voice. "Be still, La Chouette; I must finish explaining to you how, little by little, I came to repent. This revelation will be odious to you, heart of iron, and it will also prove to you how merciless I ought to be in the vengeance I wish to exercise on you in the name of our victims. I must hurry on. The joy of having you thus makes my blood run wild, my head throb with violence, as when I think of my dream. My mind wanders; perhaps one of my attacks is coming on; but I shall have time to render the approaches of death more frightful, in forcing you to hear me."

"Bold La Chouette!" cried Tortillard; "be bold with your answer. Don't you know your part? Come, tell the devil to prompt you, my old dear."

"Oh! you do well to struggle and bite," said the Schoolmaster, after a pause; "you shall not escape; you have cut my fingers to the bone, but I will tear your tongue out if you stir.

"Let us continue to converse.

"On finding myself alone—constantly alone in obscurity and silence—I began to have fits of furious rage; powerless, for the first time I lost my senses, my head wandered. Yes, although awake, I have dreamed the dream you know? the dream of the old man in the Rue de Roule—the woman drowned—the drover—all murdered! and you, soaring above all these phantoms! I tell you, it is frightful.

"I am blind; yet my thoughts assume a form, a body, and represent continually to me, in a visible manner, almost palpable, the features of my victims.

"I should not have this fearful dream, but that my mind, continually absorbed by the recollection of my past crimes, is troubled with the same visions.

"Doubtless, when one is deprived of sight, besetting ideas trace themselves almost materially on the brain. Yet, sometimes, by force of contemplating them with resigned alarm, it seems to me that these menacing spectres have pity on me; they grow dim, fade away, and disappear. Then I think I awake from a vivid dream; but I feel myself weak, exhausted, broken, and, will you believe it—oh! how you will laugh, La Chouette—I weep—do you hear? I weep. You do not laugh? But laugh! I say, laugh!"

La Chouette uttered a stifled groan.

"Louder," cried Tortillard; "we can't hear."

"Yes," continued the Schoolmaster, "I wept, for I suffered, and rage is fruitless. I say to myself, to-morrow, and to-morrow, for ever I shall be a prey to the same delirium, the same mournful desolation. What a life! oh, what a life! Better I had chosen death, than to be interred alive in this abyss, which incessantly racks my thoughts! Blind, solitary, and a prisoner! what can distract my thoughts? Nothing—nothing.

"When the phantoms cease for a moment to pass and repass on the black veil which I have before my eyes, there are other tortures—there are overwhelming comparisons. I say to myself, 'If I had remained an honest man, at this moment I should be free, tranquil, happy, loved, and honoured by mine own, instead of being blind and chained in

this dungeon, at the mercy of my accomplices.'

"Alas! the regret of happiness lost by crime, is the first step towards repentance. And when to this repentance is added an expiation of frightful severity—an expiation which changes life into a long sleep filled with avenging hallucinations of desperate reflections, perhaps then the pardon of man will follow remorse and expiation."

"Take care, old man!" cried Tortillard; "you are cutting into the parson's part! Found out, found out!"

The Schoolmaster paid no attention. "Does it astonish you to hear me talk thus, La Chouette? If I had continued to harden myself, either by other bloody misdeeds, or by the savage drunkenness of a galley-slave's life, this salutary change in me had never taken place, I know well. But alone—blind—and tortured with a visible remorse, what could I think of? New crimes—how commit them? An escape—how escape? And if I escaped, where should I go—what should I do with my liberty? No; I must henceforth live in eternal night, between the anguish of repentance and the alarm of horrifying apparitions by which I am pursued. Yet sometimes a feeble ray of hope shines in the midst of the gloom—a moment of calm succeeds to my torments: yes, for sometimes I succeed in conjuring the spectres which besiege me, by opposing to them the recollections of a past life, honest and peaceful—by carrying back my thoughts to the days of my childhood.

"Happily, you see, the blackest villains have had, at least, some years of peace and innocence to offer in opposition to their long years of crime and bloood. We are not born wicked.

"The most perverse have had the amiable simplicity of childhood—have known the sweet joys of that charming age. So, I repeat, sometimes I feel a bitter consolation in saying, though I am at this moment the object of universal execration; there was a time when I was beloved and cherished, because I was inoffensive and good.

"Alas! I must take refuge in the past, when I can; there alone can I find any repose."

On pronouncing these last words, the voice of the Schoolmaster had lost its roughness; the formidable man seemed profoundly affected; he went on: "Now, you see, the salutary influence of these thoughts is such that my rage is appeased; courage, strength, the will, all fail me to punish you; no, it is not for me to shed your blood."

"Bravo, old one! Now you see, La Chouette, that is was only a joke," cried Tortillard, applauding.

"No, it is not for me to shed your blood," resumed the Schoolmaster; "it would be a murder—excusable perhaps, but still a murder; and I have enough with three spectres! And then, who knows, you, even you! will repent some day."

Speaking thus, he mechanically relaxed his grasp.

La Chouette profited by it to seize hold of the dagger which she had placed in her bosom after the murder of the countess, and to strike a violent blow with it in order to disembarrass herself of him altogether.

He uttered a cry of great anguish. The savage frenzy of his rage, vengeance and hatred, his sanguinary instincts suddenly aroused, and exasperated at this attack, made an unexpected and terrible explosion, under which his reason sunk, already much shattered by so many trials.

"Ah! viper, I felt your tooth!" cried he in a voice trembling with rage, and tightly grasping La Chouette, who had thought to escape. "You crawl in the cellar," added he, more and more wandering, "but I am going to crush you, Screech-Owl. You waited, doubtless, the coming of the phantoms; my ears tingle, my head turns, as when they are about to come. Yes, I am not deceived. Oh! there they are; out of the darkness they approach—they approach! How pale they are, yet their blood, how it flows, red and smoking. They frighten you—you struggle. Oh, well! be tranquil, you shall not see them; I have pity on you; I shall make you blind. You shall be like me, without eyes!" Here he paused.

La Chouette uttered a yell so horrible that Tortillard, alarmed, jumped from his seat, and stood erect.

The frightful screams of La Chouette seemed to increase the insanity of the Schoolmaster.

"Sing," said he, in a low voice, "sing, La Chouette, sing your song of death. You are happy; you will never more see the phantoms of our victims; the old man of the Rue de la Roule, the drowned woman, the drover. But I see them, they come; they touch me. Oh! how cold they are, oh!"

The last spark of intelligence in this poor wretch was extinguished in this cry of horror. Then he reasoned no more, spoke not; he behaved and roared like a wild beast: he only obeyed the savage instinct of destruction for destruction's sake. Horrible, frightful events took place in the gloom of the cellar.

A quick, rapid trampling was heard, interrupted at frequent intervals by a dull sound, like that of a bag of bones which rebounded on a stone against which one wished to break it. Acute moans, and bursts of infernal laughter, accompanied each of these blows. Then there was a death-rattle of agony. Then nothing could be heard but the furious trampling; nothing but the heavy and rebounding blows, which still continued.

Soon a distant noise of footsteps and voices reached even to the depths of the cellar. Numerous lights appeared at the extremity of the subterranean passage. Tortillard, frozen with terror by the frightful tragedy

which he had heard, but not seen, perceived several persons rapidly descend the staircase. In a moment, the cellar was invaded by several police officers, at the head of whom was Narcisse Borel; municipal guards closed the march. Tortillard was seized on the upper steps of the cellar, holding still in his hand La Chouette's basket.

Narcisse Borel, followed by some of his men, descended into the cellar. All stopped, struck with such a horrible spectacle. Chained by the leg to an enormous stone placed in the middle of the dungeon, the Schoolmaster, horrible, monstrous, his hair knotted, his beard long, his mouth foaming, clothed with bloody rags, turned like a wild beast around his dungeon, dragging after him, by the feet, the corpse of La Chouette, whose head was horribly mutilated, broken, and crushed. It needed a violent struggle to take from him the bleeding remains of his accomplice, and to secure him.

After a vigorous resistance, they succeeded in transporting him to the lower room of the tavern, a dull, gloomy apartment, lighted by a single window. There were found, handcuffed and guarded, Barbillon, Nicholas Martial, his mother and sister. They had been arrested just at the moment they were dragging off the diamond broker to murder her. She was recovering in another room. Stretched on the ground, and held, with great difficulty, by two officers, the Schoolmaster, slightly wounded in the arm by La Chouette, but completely insensible, roared and bellowed like a baited bull. At times he almost raised himself from the earth by his convulsive movements.

Barbillon, with lowered head, livid face, discoloured lips, fixed and savage eye, his long black hair falling on the collar of his blouse, torn in the struggle, was seated on a bench; his arms, confined by handcuffs, rested on his knees. The juvenile appearance of this scoundrel (he was hardly eighteen), and the regularity of his features, rendered still more deplorable the hideous stamp with which debauchery and crime had marked his countenance. Unmoved, he said not a word. This apparent insensibility was due to stupidity or to a frigid energy; his breathing was rapid, and from time to time, with his shackled hands, he wiped the sweat from his pale forehead.

Alongside of him was placed Calabash; her cap had been torn; her yellowish hair, tied behind with a string, hung down her back in many tangled and disordered tresses. More enraged than dispirited, her thin and jaundiced cheeks somewhat coloured, she regarded with disdain the affliction of her brother Nicholas, placed on a chair opposite.

Foreseeing the fate which awaited him, this bandit, sinking within himself, his head hanging, his knees trembling, was almost dead with affright; his teeth chattered convulsively, and he uttered low and mournful groans.

Alone, among all, the widow, standing with her back to the wall, had lost nothing of her audacity. With her head erect, she cast a firm look around her. Her mask of bronze betrayed not the slightest emotion. Yet, at the sight of Bras-Rouge, who was brought into the lower room, after having assisted in the minute search which the commissary had just made throughout the whole house—yet, at the sight of Bras-Rouge, we repeat, the features of the widow contracted in spite of herself; her small eyes, ordinarily dull, sparkled with rage; her compressed lips became bloodless; she stiffened her manacled hands. Then, as if she had regretted this mute manifestation of rage and impotent hatred, she conquered her emotion, and became of icy calmness.

While the commissary drew up his report, Narcisse Borel, rubbing his hands, cast a complacent look on the important capture he had just made, which delivered Paris from a band of dangerous criminals; but feeling of what utility Bras-Rouge had been in this expedition, he could not help expressing to him by a glance his gratitude.

The father of Tortillard was obliged to partake, until after their judgment, the prison and fate of those whom he had denounced; like them, he wore handcuffs; still more than them, he had a trembling, alarmed air, uttering sorrowful groans, and giving to his weasel face every expression of terror. He embraced Tortillard, as if he sought some consolation in these paternal caresses.

The little cripple showed but little sensibility at these proofs of tenderness; he had just learned that, until further orders, he was to be sent to the prison for young offenders.

"What a misfortune to part with my darling son!" cried Bras-Rouge, feigning to weep; "it is we who are the most unfortunate, Ma'am Martial, for they separate us from our children."

The widow could no longer contain herself; not doubting the treason of Bras-Rouge, which she had prophesied, she cried, "I was sure that you sold my son who is at Toulon. There, Judas!" and she spat in his face. "You sell our heads; so be it; they will see handsome corpses—corpses of the real Martials!"

"Yes; we will not budge before the scaffold," added Calabash, with savage pride.

The widow, pointing to Nicholas with a withering glance of contempt, said to her daughter, "This coward will dishonour us on the scaffold!"

Some moments afterward, the widow and Calabash, accompanied by two police, were placed in a cab and sent to Saint Lazare.

The three men were conducted to La Force.

The Schoolmaster was transported to the dépôt of the Conciergerie, where there are cells destined to receive temporarily the insane.

CHAPTER XL.

THE INTRODUCTION.

SOME days after the murder of Mrs. Seraphin, the death of La Chouette, and the arrest of the band of malefactors surprised at Bras-Rouge's, Rudolph repaired to the house in the Rue du Temple.

We have said that—intending to overcome cunning by cunning, and to expose the concealed crimes of Jacques Ferrand to the punishment they merited, notwithstanding the address and hypocrisy with which he disguised them—Rudolph had caused to be brought from her prison in Germany a girl named Cecily.

She was a very beautiful quadroon, whose story ran briefly thus: Owned by a Louisiana planter, he had refused permission for her to marry another of his slaves, known as David, because he had, sultan-like, set his own choice upon her. David, by intelligence and a long stay in France, had attained the position of surgeon on the plantation, and resisted his master with all the strength of his love for the girl. He was flogged, and Cecily locked up. At this juncture, Rudolph's yacht was off the plantation. He heard the story, and, landing in the night with a boat's crew, carried off David and Cecily in the planter's teeth, leaving him a large sum in indemnification. The slaves were wedded in France, but David won no happiness. He became Rudolph's physician-in-chief, worthily filling the post; but Cecily's three-part white blood revolted at her union with a negro, and flung herself into the first arms open to her. Her life was a series of scandals, so that David would have killed her; but Rudolph induced him to prefer her life imprisonment in Germany. Thence she is now brought.

Having arrived the evening previous, this creature, as handsome as she was perverted, as enchanting as she was dangerous, had received detailed instructions from Baron de Graün.

It will be remembered that after the last interview between Rudolph and Mrs. Pipelet, the latter having adroitly proposed Cecily to Mrs. Seraphin to replace Louise Morel as servant to the notary, the housekeeper had willingly received her overtures, and promised to speak on the subject to Jacques Ferrand, which she had done in terms the most favourable to Cecily, the very same morning of the day on which she (Mrs. Seraphin) had been drowned by Ravageurs' Island.

Rudolph went to learn the result of Cecily's offer. To his great astonishment, on entering the lodge, he found, although it was eleven o'clock in the morning, Pipelet in bed, and Anastasia standing beside him, offering him drink.

Alfred, whose forehead and eyes disappeared under a formidable cotton cap, not answering Anastasia, she concluded he was asleep, and closed the curtains of the bed. On turning, she saw Rudolph. Immediately she carried, according to custom, the back of her open left hand against her wig.

"Your servant, my prince of lodgers. You find me overturned, amazed, grown thin! There are famous doings in the house, without counting that Alfred has been in bed since yesterday."

"And what is the matter?"

"Why ask?"

"Why not?"

"Always the same. The monster yearns more and more after Alfred; he alarms me so that I do not know what more to do."

"Cabrion again?"

"Again."

"He is the devil, then!"

"I shall begin to think so, M. Rudolph; for the blackguard always guesses when I am out. Hardly do I turn on my heels than he is here on the back of my darling, who does not know how to defend himself any more than a child. Yesterday again, while I was gone to M. Ferrand's, the notary's—there is the place to hear news"—

"And Cecily?" said Rudolph, hastily. "I came to know"—

"Stop, my prince of lodgers; do not fluster me. I have so many things to tell you that I shall lose myself if you break my thread."

"Well, I listen."

"In the first place, as concerns this house; just imagine that yesterday they came and arrested Mother Burette."

"The pawnbroker on the second floor?"

"Yes. It appears that she had many droll trades beside that of a pawnbroker! She was a fencess, melterdowness, shoplifteress, smasheress, forgeress, coineress, everything that rhymes with dishonestness. The worst of all is, that her old beau, Bras-Rouge, is also arrested. I told you there was a real earthquake in the house. What!"

"Bras-Rouge also arrested?"

"Yes; in his tavern on the Champs Elysées. All are boxed, even to his son Tortillard, the wicked little cripple. They say there has been a whole heap of murderers there; that they were a band of assassins; that La Chouette, one of the friends of old Burette, has been strangled; and that if help had not arrived in time, Mathieu, the diamond broker, would have been murdered. Aint this news?"

"Bras-Rouge arrested! La Chouette dead!" said Rudolph to himself, with astonishment. "Poor Fleur de Marie is avenged."

"So much for this. Without excepting the new infamy of Cabrion, I am going at once to finish with that brigand. You will see what impudence! When Old Burette was arrested, and we knew that Bras-Rouge, our landlord, was trapped, I said to my old darling, 'You must trot right off to the proprietor, and tell him that Bras-Rouge is

locked up.' Alfred set out. At the end of two hours he came back to me, in such a state—white as a sheet, and blowing like an ox!"

"What was the matter?"

"You shall see, M. Rudolph. Only fancy, that six steps from here is a large white wall; my darling, on leaving the house, looked by chance on this wall; what does he see written there with charcoal, in large letters? 'Pipelet & Cabrion!'—the two names joined by a short *and*. This mark of union with this scoundrel sticks in his stomach the most. That began to upset him; ten steps farther, what does he see on the great door of the Temple? 'Pipelet & Cabrion!' always with the sign of union. On he goes; at each step, M. Rudolph, he saw written these cursed names on the walls of the houses, on the doors, everywhere, 'Pipelet & Cabrion.' He began to see stars; he thought everyone was looking at him; he pulled his hat down to his nose, he was so much ashamed. He went on the boulevard, thinking that Cabrion had confined his indecencies to the Rue du Temple. All along the boulevard, on each place where there was room to write, always 'Pipelet & Cabrion,' to the death! Finally, the poor dear man arrived at the proprietor's so bewildered, that, after having stuttered and stammered for a quarter of an hour, he could not understand one word of all that Alfred said; so he sent him back, calling him an old imbecile, and told him to send me to explain the thing. Alfred retired, coming back by another route, in order to avoid the names he had seen written on the walls. But"—

"Pipelet and Cabrion that road too?"

"As you say, my prince of lodgers. In this way the poor dear man arrived, stupified, amazed, wishing to exile himself. He told me his story; I calmed him as well as I could. I left him, and went with Cecily to the notary's. You think this is all? Oh, no! Hardly was my back turned than Cabrion, who had watched my departure, had the impudence to send here two great hussies, who attacked Alfred. My hair stands on an end. I will tell you all this directly. Let us finish with the notary. I set out, then, in a coach with Cecily, as you are advised. She wore her pretty German peasant's costume, 'as she had just arrived, and had not time to change it,' as I was to tell M. Ferrand. You will believe me, if you please, my prince of lodgers, I have seen many pretty girls; I have seen myself in my spring-time; but never have I seen (myself included) a young person who could hold a candle to Cecily. She has, above all, in the look of her large, wicked, black eyes, something—I don't know what; but, for sure, there is something striking. What eyes!

"Alfred is not tender, but the first time that she looked at him he became as red as a carrot; for nothing in the world he would not have looked a second time—he wriggled on his chair for an hour afterward as if he had been seated on a thorn; he told me afterward that the look had recalled to his mind all the histories of that impudent Bradamanté about the savagesses, which made him blush so much, my old prude of an Alfred."

"But the notary? the notary?"

"Yes, M. Rudolph. It was about seven in the evening when we reached M. Ferrand's; I told the porter to tell his master that Mrs. Pipelet was there with the servant whom old Seraphin had spoken about, and told me to bring. Hereupon the porter uttered a sigh, and asked me if I knew what had happened to Mrs. Seraphin. I said no. Oh, M. Rudolph, here is another earthquake!"

"What now?"

"Old Seraphin was drowned in an excursion to the country which she had made with one of her relations."

"Drowned! A party to the country in winter?" said Rudolph, surprised.

"Yes, M. Rudolph, drowned. It astonishes me more than it grieves me; for since the misfortune of poor Louise, whom she denounced, I hated Seraphin. I said to myself, 'She is drowned, is she; after all, it won't kill me.' That's my character."

"And M. Ferrand?"

"The porter at first said he thought I could not see his master, and begged me to wait in the lodge, but at the end of a moment he returned for me; we crossed the court, and entered a chamber. There was only a single candle burning. The notary was seated at the chimney-corner where smoked the remains of a firebrand. What a hovel! I had never seen M. Ferrand. Isn't he horrid? Here is another one who might in vain have offered me the throne of Araby to prove false to Alfred."

"And did he appear struck with the beauty of Cecily?"

"Can anyone know, with his green spectacles? such an old sacristan ought to be no judge of women. Yet when we both entered, he made a kind ot start from his chair; it was, doubtless, astonishment at seeing the Alsatian costume of Cecily; for she had (only ten million times better) the air of one of those little broom girls, with her short petticoats, and her pretty legs in blue stockings with red clocks! my eye, what calves! and such slender ankles! and the little foot! the notary was bewildered at seeing her."

"It was, doubtless, the strange costume which astonished him?"

"Must think so, but the funny moment drew near. Happily I remembered the maxim you taught me, M. Rudolph; it was my salvation."

"What maxim?"

"You know: 'Hide your desire if you want it granted.' Then I said to myself, I must rid my prince of lodgers of his German, by placing her with the master of Louise; and I said to the notary, without giving him time

to draw breath: 'Pardon me, sir, if my niece comes dressed in the costume of her country; but she has just arrived: she has no other clothes than these, and I have no means of getting her others, as it would hardly be worth while; for we came only to thank you for having said to Mrs. Seraphin that you would consent to see Cecily, from the good recommendations I had given her; yet I do not think she can suit, sir.'"

"'Very well, Mrs. Pipelet."

"'Why will your niece not suit me?' said the notary, who, seated in the chimney corner, seemed to look at us from under his spectacles. 'Because Cecily begins to be home-sick, sir. She has only been here three days, yet she wishes to return, even if she has to beg her way back, and sell brooms like her countrywomen.' 'But you, her relation, will not suffer this?' 'I am her relation, it is true; but she is an orphan; she is twenty years old, and she is mistress of her own actions.' 'Bah! bah! mistress of her own actions; at her age she should obey her relations,' answered he, roughly.

"Hereupon Cecily began to cry and tremble, pressing against me; the notary made her afraid, very likely."

"And Ferrand?"

"He grumbled and muttered: 'To abandon a girl at her age is to ruin her. To return to Germany as a beggar, it is fine! Do you, her aunt, allow such conduct?' 'Well, well,' said I to myself, 'you're right. I'll place Cecily with you, or I'll lose my name.' 'I am her aunt, it is true" answered I, 'but it is a very unfortunate relationship for me; I have enough on my hands; I would be just as well pleased to have my niece go away as to have her on my hands. May Old Nick run away with such relations who send you such great girls as this without paying the postage.' To crown all, there was Cecily, who seemed to be up to trap, bursting into tears. Thereupon the notary assumed a snivelling tone like a preacher, and said to me: 'You will have to account above for the trust that Providence has placed in your hands; it would be a crime to expose this young girl to perdition. I consent to aid you in your charitable work, if your niece promises me to be industrious, honest, and pious; and, above all, never to go out. I will have pity on her, and take her in my service.' 'No, no, I would rather go back to my country,' said Cecily, still weeping."

"Her dangerous duplicity did not fail her," thought Rudolph; "the diabolical creature has, I see, perfectly comprised the orders of Baron de Graün."

Then the prince said aloud, "Did Ferrand appear vexed at the perverseness of Cecily?"

"Yes, M. Rudolph; he muttered between his teeth, and said to her hastily, 'It is not a question, mademoiselle, of what you prefer, but of what is suitable and decent. Heaven will not abandon you, if you lead an honest life and fulfil your religious duties. You will be here in a house as strict as holy; if your aunt really loves you, she will profit by my offer; at first you will have but small wages, but if by your conduct and zeal you deserve more, perhaps I will increase them.'

"Good! thought I to myself; the notary is caught! here is Cecily fixed at your house, you heartless old miser, Seraphin was in your service for many years, and you have not even the appearance of remembering that she was drowned the day before yesterday. And I said aloud: 'Doubtless, sir, the place is advantageous, but if the young woman is home-sick?' 'That will pass away,' answered the notary; 'come, do you decide—yes or no? If you consent, bring your niece to-morrow night at this hour, and she can enter at once into my service—my porter will instruct her. As to wages, I commence by giving her twenty francs a month and board and lodging.' 'Oh, sir, you'll add five francs more?' 'No, by-and-bye—if I am content—we shall see. But I must inform you, that your niece must never go out, and must have no one to come and see her.' 'Oh, sir, who would come and see her? She knows no one but me in Paris, and I have my own door to take care of; it has incommoded me enough to come with her to-day—you will never see me again—she will be as much of a stranger as if she had never come out of her own country. As to her not going out, there is a very simple way—let her wear her own costume; she would never dare go out in the streets dressed in that outdacious manner.' 'You are right,' said the notary! 'it is, besides, respectable to dress in the costume of one's country. She may, then, remain in her Alsatian dress.' 'Come,' said I to Cecily, who, with her head down, wept continually; 'you must decide, my child; a good place, in an honest house, is not to be found every day; besides, if you refuse, you must make your own arrangements; I'll have no more to do with them.' Then Cecily answered, sighing, 'that she consented to remain; but on condition that if in a fortnight her home-sickness troubled her too much, she might go away.' 'I do not wish to keep you by force,' said the notary; 'and I am not embarrassed to find servants. Here is your handsel; your aunt will only have to bring you to-morrow night.' Cecily had not ceased to weep. I accepted for her the advance of forty sous from the old screw, and we returned here."

"Very well, Mrs. Pipelet; I do not forget my promise. Here is what I promised if you should succeed in getting a situation for this girl, who embarrassed me."

"Wait until to-morrow, my prince of lodgers," said Mrs. Pipelet, refusing the money; "for, perhaps, he will change his mind when I take Cecily to him this evening."

"I do not think that he will change his mind; but where is she?"

"In the cabinet belonging to M. Robert's apartments; in obedience to your orders she does not stir from them; she seems as resigned as a lamb, although she has eyes—oh! what eyes! But, apropos of M. Robert, isn't he an intriguer? When he came himself to superintend the packing of his furniture, did he not tell me that if there came any letters here addressed to Madam Vincent, they were for him, and to send them to No. 5, Rue Mondovi. He to be addressed under the name of a woman, the beautiful bird! how cunning it is! But this is not all; did he not have the impudence to ask me what had become of his wood? 'Your wood! why not your forest at once?' I answered. Now, it is true, for two mean cart-loads of nothing at all—one of drift and the other new wood, for he did not buy all new wood—the save-penny made a fuss! His wood? 'I burned all your wood,' said I, 'to save your furniture from the damp; otherwise mushrooms would have sprung up on your embroidered cap, and on your glow-worm robe de chambre that you wore so often while you were waiting for the little lady who quizzed you."

A heavy, plaintive groan from Alfred interrupted. "There is my beauty dreaming; he is going to wake up; you will allow me, my prince of lodgers?"

"Certainly; I have, besides, some more questions to ask."

"Well! my sweet, how do you feel?" said Mrs. Pipelet to her husband, opening the curtains; "here is M. Rudolph! he knows the new infamy of Cabrion; he pities you with all his heart."

"Oh, sir," said Alfred, turning his head in a languishing manner towards Rudolph: "this time I shall not get over it; the monster has stabbed me to the heart. I am the subject of the placards of the capital; my name can be read on all the walls, side by side with this scoundrel's. 'Pipelet & Cabrion,' with an enormous *and!* I! united to this infernal blackguard in the eyes of the capital of Europe!"

"M. Rudolph knows it; but what he does not know is your adventure of last night with those two strapping women."

"Oh! sir, he kept his most monstrous infamy for the last; this passed all bounds," said Alfred, in a mournful tone.

"Come, my dear M. Pipelet, relate to me this new misfortune."

"All he had done previously was nothing to this, sir. He succeeded in his object—thanks to proceedings the most shameful. I do not know if I have the strength to relate it! confusion and shame will impede me at each step."

Pipelet being painfully raised in the bed, modestly buttoned up his flannel waistcoat, and commenced in these terms: "My wife had just gone out; absorbed in the bitterness caused by the prostitution of my name written on all the walls of the capital, I sought to distract myself by endeavouring to sole a boot, twenty times taken up and twenty times abandoned, thanks to the obstinate persecutions of my tormentor. I was seated before a table, when I saw the door of my lodge open, and a woman enter. This woman was wrapped in a cloak, with a hood; I arose politely from my seat, and touched my hat. At this moment, a second woman, also enveloped in a cloak with a hood, entered my lodge, and locked the door inside.

"Although astonished at the familiarity of this procedure, and the silence which the two women preserved, I again rose from the chair, and again carried my hand to my hat. Then, sir; no, no, I never can—my modesty revolts."

"Come, Old Modesty, you are among men; go on then?"

"Then," resumed Alfred, becoming crimson, "the mantles fell, and what did I see? Two species of sirens or nymphs, with no other clothing than a tunic of leaves, the head also crowned with foliage; I was petrified. Then they both advanced towards me, extending their arms, as if to invite me to precipitate myself into them."

"The hussies!" said Anastasia.

"The advances of these barefaced individuals revolted me," resumed Alfred, animated by chaste indignation; "and, following habit, which never abandons me in the most critical circumstances of my life, I remained completely immovable on my chair; when, profiting by my stupor, the two sirens approached me by a kind of slow whirl, spinning round on their legs, and moving their arms. I became more and more immovable. They reached me; they twisted their arms around me."

"Twisted their arms around an aged, married man! Oh, if I had been there with my broomstick," cried Anastasia, "I'd have given a cadence, and spinning of legs to some purpose."

"When I felt myself embraced," continued Alfred, "my blood made one rush—I was half dead. Then one of the sirens—the boldest, a large tall blonde—leaned on my shoulder, raised my hat, and uncovered my head, all to music, spinning on her legs and moving her arms; then her accomplice drew a pair of scissors from among the leaves, collected together an enormous lock of all the hair that remained behind my head, and cut it off. All, sir, all; always with the spinning around on her legs: then she said to me, singing, 'It is for Cabrion!' and the other impudence repeated in chorus, 'It is for Cabrion! it is for Cabrion!'"

After a pause, accompanied by a grievous sigh, Alfred went on with his story:

"During this scandalous spoliation, I raised my eyes, and saw looking through the window of the lodge the infernal face of Cabrion, with his beard and pointed hat. He laughed; he was hideous! To escape

this odious vision, I shut my eyes. When I opened them again, all had disappeared. I found myself on my chair, my head uncovered, and completely devastated! You see, sir, Cabrion has gained his end by force of cunning, audacity, and obstinacy; and by what means. He wished to make me pass for his friend; he began by putting up a notice here that we would carry on a friendly trade together. Not content with that, at this very moment my name is connected with his on all the walls of the capital. There is not, at this moment, an inhabitant of Paris who can have any doubt of my intimacy with this wretch: he wished some of my hair, he has it; all thanks to the impudent exactions of these brazen sirens. Now, sir, you must see, there only remains for me a flight from France—ma belle France! where I thought to live and die."

Alfred threw himself backward on his bed, and clasped his hands.

"But just the contrary, old darling; now that he has your hair, he will leave you quiet."

"Leave me quiet!" cried Pipelet, with a convulsive start; "but you do not know him; he is insatiable. Now who knows what he will next want from me?"

Rigolette, appearing at the entrance of the lodge, put an end to the lamentations.

"Do not enter, mademoiselle!" cried Pipelet, faithful to his habits of chaste susceptibility. "I am in bed." So saying, he drew one of the sheets to his chin. Rigolette stopped discreetly at the threshold.

"I was just going to see you, neighbour," said Rudolph to her. "Will you wait one moment?" Then, addressing Anastasia, "Do not forget to conduct Cecily to-night to M. Ferrand's."

"Be tranquil, my prince of lodgers; at seven o'clock she shall be installed here. Now that Madam Morel can walk, I will ask her to stay in the lodge, for Alfred would not, for an empire, remain alone."

The rosy cheeks of Rigolette had become paler and paler; her charming face, until now so fresh, so round, had lengthened a little; her piquant countenance, ordinarily so animated and lively, was become serious and still more sad since the last interview between the grisette and Fleur de Marie at the gate of the prison of Saint Lazare.

"How happy I am to see you, neighbour!" said she to Rudolph, when he came out of the lodge. "I have many things to tell you."

"In the first place, how do you do? Let me look at your pretty face. Is it still gay and rosy? Alas! no; I find you pale. I am sure you work too much."

"Oh! no, M. Rudolph; I assure you I am now used to this little increase of work. What changes me is grief. Every time I see poor Germain I become still more sad."

"He is, then, very much depressed?"

"More than ever, M. Rudolph; and what is annoying is, that everything that I do to console him increases his despondency; it is like a spell." A tear obscured her large black eyes.

"Explain this to me."

"For instance, yesterday I went to see him to take a book he wished to have, because it was a romance that we used to read together in our happy days. At the sight of this book, he burst into tears, which did not surprise me, it was very natural. Dear memento of our evenings, so quiet, so pleasant, seated by my stove, in my snug little room, to compare with his frightful life in prison. Poor Germain! it is very cruel."

"Be comforted," said Rudolph to the young girl. "When Germain gets out of prison, and his innocence is acknowledged, he will find his mother and friends, and he will soon forget, in their society and yours, the terrible moments of trial."

"Yes, but until then, M. Rudolph, he is going to be still more tormented. And, besides, this is not all."

"What is there besides?"

"As he is the only honest man among all these bandits, they are prejudiced against him, because he cannot agree with them. A turnkey, a very good man, told me to advise Germain, for his own sake, to be less proud, to try to be a little more familiar with the men; but he cannot. They are stronger than he is, and I fear that some day they will injure him." Then, suddenly interrupting herself, she said, drying her tears, "But see, now, I only think of myself, and forget to speak to you about La Goualeuse."

"La Goualeuse?" said Rudolph, with surprise.

"The day before yesterday, on going to see Louise at Saint Lazare, I met her."

"The Goualeuse?"

"Yes, M. Rudolph."

"In Saint Lazare?"

"She came out with an old lady."

"It is impossible!" cried Rudolph, astonished.

"I assure you it was she, neighbour."

"You must be mistaken."

"No, no; although she was dressed as a peasant girl, I knew her at once. She is still very handsome, although pale; and she has the same soft, melancholy manner as formerly."

"Come to Paris without my knowledge! I cannot believe it. What was she doing at Saint Lazare?"

"The same as I was; visiting a prisoner, doubtless. I had no time to ask more questions; the old woman who accompanied her had such a cross look, and was in such a hurry. So you know La Goualeuse also, M. Rudolph?"

"Certainly."

"Then there is no more doubt that it is you of whom she spoke."

"Of me?"

"Yes. I related to her the misfortunes of Louise and Germain, both so good, so virtuous, and so persecuted by that villain Jacques Ferrand, taking care not to tell what you forbid, that you interested yourself in them; then La Goualeuse told me that if a generous person whom she knew was informed of the unhappy and undeserved fate of my poor prisoners, he would certainly come to their assistance. I asked the name of this person, and she named you, M. Rudolph."

"It is she, it is she."

"You may suppose that we were both much astonished at this discovery, or resemblance of names. We promised to write if our Rudolph was the same person. And it appears that you are the same, M. Rudolph."

"Yes, I have also interested myself for this poor child. But what you have told me of her presence in Paris surprises me so much, that if you had not given me so many details of your interview with her, I should have persisted in believing that you were mistaken. But, adieu, neighbour; what you have just told me about La Goualeuse obliges me to leave you. Remain still reserved towards Louise and Germain as regards the protection of unknown friends. This secrecy is more necessary than ever. Apropos, how are the Morel Family?"

"Better and better, M. Rudolph. The mother is on her feet again; the children improve daily. All owe their life to you—their happiness. You are so generous to them!"

"And how is poor Morel?"

"Better. I had news from him yesterday. He seems occasionally to have some lucid moments; there is great hope of restoring him to reason."

"Come, courage; I shall soon see you again. Have you need of anything? Do you still earn enough to support yourself?"

"Oh, yes, M. Rudolph; I take a little from my hours of rest, and it is not much damage, for I hardly sleep now."

"Alas! my poor little neighour, I much fear that Papa Crétu and Ramonette will not sing much more if they wait for you to begin."

"You are not mistaken, M. Rudolph; my birds and I sing no more, for—now you are going to laugh! well, it seems to me that they comprehend that I am sad; yes, instead of warbling gaily when I arrive, they utter such low, plaintive notes, that they appear to wish to console me. I am foolish to believe this, am I not, M. Rudolph?"

"Not at all; I am sure that your good friends, the birds, love you too much not to perceive your sorrow."

"Really, the poor little things are so intelligent!" said Rigolette, naïvely, much satisfied at being assured of the sagacity of the companions of her solitude.

"Without doubt, nothing is more intelligent than gratitude. Come, once more, adieu. Soon, neighbour, I hope your pretty eyes will become sparkling, your cheeks very rosy, and your songs so gay—so gay—that Papa Crétu and Ramonette will hardly be able to follow you."

"May what you have said be true, M. Rudolph," answered Rigolette, with a heavy sigh. "Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, for the present!"

Rudolph could not comprehend how Madam Georges had, without advising him, sent or brought Fleur de Marie to Paris; he returned home, to send an express to the farm at Bouqueval. The moment he entered the Rue du Plumet, he saw a postchaise stop before the door of the hotel; it was Murphy, who had just returned from Normandy. The squire had gone there, as we have stated, to unmask the sinister projects of the stepmother of Madam d'Harville, and Bradamanté, her accomplice.

CHAPTER XLI.

MURPHY AND POLIDORI.

RADIANT with joy was the face of Sir Walter Murphy. On descending from the carriage, he handed to one of the servants a pair of pistols, took off his long riding-coat, and, without losing time to change his dress, he followed Rudolph, who, very impatient, had preceded him to his apartment.

"Good news, your highness, good news!" cried the squire, when he found himself alone with Rudolph. "The wretches are unmasked! Lord d'Orbigny is saved! You sent me off in time; one hour later, a new crime would have been committed."

"And Madam d'Harville?"

"She is overjoyed at regaining her father's affection, and at having arrived in time, thanks to your advice, to save him from certain death!"

"Polidori?"—

"Was once more the worthy accomplice of the step-mother of Madam d'Harville. But what a monster is this stepmother! what audacity! And Polidori! Oh! my lord, you have often been pleased to thank me for what you call the proofs of my devotedness."

"I have always had proofs of your friendship, my good Sir Walter."

"Well, never, your highness, never—no, never has this friendship been put to a severer test than in this affair," said the squire, in a half-joking manner.

"How is that?"

"Disguises as coalheavers, and so on, were nothing, absolutely nothing, compared to the journey I have just made with this infernal Polidori."

"What do you say? Polidori"—

"I have brought him with me."

"With you?"

"With me. Judge what a companion!

during twelve hours, side by side with the man I despise and hate the most in the world! I would as soon travel with a serpent; my antipathy"—

"And where is Polidori now?"

"In the house of the Allée des Veuves, under good, sure guard."

"Did he make no resistance to following you?"

"None. I left him the choice of being arrested on the spot by the French authorities, or being my prisoner in the Allée des Veuves. He did not hesitate."

"You were right; it is better to have him thus in our own hands. You are a man of gold, my friend; but relate to me your journey; I am impatient to know how this unworthy woman and her depraved accomplice have been unmasked."

"Nothing could be plainer. I had only to follow your instructions to the letter to terrify and crush these wretches. In this case, your highness has saved, as usual, people of worth, and punished the wicked; noble Providence that you are!"

"Sir Walter, Sir Walter, do you remember the flatteries of Baron de Graün?" said Rudolph, smiling.

"Well, let it pass. I will commence, then; or, rather, you will first please to read this letter, from Madam d'Harville, who will inform you of all that occurred previous to my arrival."

"A letter? give it to me quickly."

Murphy, handing Rudolph the letter, added, "As it was agreed upon, instead of accompanying the lady to her father's I alighted at an inn, a short distance from the château, where I was to stay until her ladyship sent for me."

Rudolph read what follows, with tender and impatient solicitude:

"YOUR HIGHNESS,—

"To all I owe you already, I add the life of my father!

"I shall let facts speak for themselves; they will tell you better than I can, what new treasures of gratitude towards you I have collected in my heart.

"Comprehending all the importance of the counsels which you gave me through Sir Walter Murphy, who rejoined me on the road to Normandy, just as I left Paris, I arrived in all haste at the Château des Aubiers.

"I do not know why, but the features of the servants who received me appeared sinister; I did not see among them any of the old servitors of our house; no one knew me; I was obliged to announce myself. I learned that, some days before, my father was quite ill, and my stepmother had just returned from Paris with a physician.

"No more doubt—it was Dr. Polidori!

"Wishing to be conducted at once to my father, I asked where an old valet was, to whom he was much attached. This man had left the château some time before; this information was given me by a butler, who had conducted me to my apartments, saying, 'That he would go and inform my stepmother of my arrival.'

"Was it an allusion or prejudice? it seemed to me that my arrival was disagreeable even to the servants. Everything in the château seemed mournful and sad. In the disposition of mind in which I found myself, one seeks to draw conclusions from the merest trifles. I remarked everywhere traces of disorder, of negligence, as if it had been thought useless to take care of a dwelling so soon to be abandoned.

"My anxiety increased each moment. After having settled my daughter and her governess, in my apartment, I was about to go to my father, when my stepmother entered.

"Notwithstanding her duplicity and the command which she ordinarily has over herself, she appeared uneasy at my arrival.

"'M. d'Orbigny did not expect your visit, madam,' said she to me. 'He is so ill, that such a surprise might be fatal. I think it, then, suitable to leave him in ignorance of your presence; he cannot, in any way'—

"I did not allow her to finish.

"'A great misfortune has happened, madam,' said I; 'M. d'Harville is dead! victim of a fatal imprudence! After such a deplorable event, I cannot remain in Paris, and I have come to pass at my father's my mourning.'

"'You are a widow! Oh! what overpowering good fortune!' cried my stepmother, in a rage.

"From what you know of the unhappy marriage which this woman schemed for me, your highness will comprehend the atrocity of her exclamation.

"'It is because I feared that you would be also as overpoweringly fortunate as I am, madam, that I came here,' said I, perhaps imprudently: 'I wish to see my father.'

"'Your unexpected appearance may do your father much harm,' cried she, placing herself before me, to bar the passage. 'I will not allow you to enter his chamber until I have informed him of your return, with all the precautions his situation requires.'

"I was in a state of cruel perplexity. A sudden surprise might, indeed, prove dangerous to my father; but this woman, ordinarily so cold, so much the mistress of herself, seemed so alarmed at my presence; I had so many reasons to doubt the sincerity of her solicitude for the health of him whom she had married from cupidity: finally, the presence of Dr. Polidori, my mother's murderer, caused a terror so great, that, believing the life of my father to be threatened, I did not hesitate between the hope of saving him and the fear of causing him any serious emotions.

"'I will see my father at once,' said I to my stepmother.

"And although she caught me by the arms, I passed out.

"Losing her self-possession completely, this woman again endeavoured to stop me. This incredible resistance redoubled my alarm. I disengaged myself from her hands. Knowing the apartment of my father, I ran thither rapidly; I entered. Oh, your highness! on my life, I shall never forget the scene presented to my view. My father, almost unrecognisable, pale, thin, suffering painted on every feature, with his head leaning on a pillow, was stretched out in a large armchair.

"At the chimney corner, standing near him, was Dr. Polidori, prepared to pour in a cup, which a nurse presented to him, some drops of a liquid contained in a little glass bottle which he held in his hand.

"His long red beard gave a still more sinister expression to his face. I entered so precipitately that he made a gesture of surprise, exchanged a look of intelligence with my stepmother, who followed in haste, and instead of giving my father the potion which he had prepared for him, he quickly placed it on the chimney-piece.

"Guided by an instinct which I cannot yet account for, my first movement was to seize the phial.

"Remarking the surprise and alarm of my stepmother and Polidori, I felicitated myself on my action. My father, stupified, seemed irritated at seeing me, as I expected. Polidori cast a ferocious glance at me; notwithstanding the presence of my father and that of the nurse, I feared that this wretch, seeing his crime almost discovered, would carry matters to extremities.

"I felt the need of help at this decisive moment; I rang the bell; one of the servants appeared; I begged him to say to my valet (who had his instructions) to go and bring some things I had left at the inn; Sir Walter Murphy knew that, not to arouse the suspicions of my stepmother, I would employ this subterfuge to bring him to me.

"The surprise of my father and my stepmother was such, that the servant retired before they could say a word; I was reassured; in a few moments Sir Walter would be near me.

"'What does this mean?' said my father, at length, in a feeble but imperious and angry tone. 'You here, Clemence, without being sent for? And then, hardly arrived, you take possession of the phial which contains the potion that the doctor was about to give me; will you explain this folly?'

"'Leave the room,' said my stepmother to the nurse. 'Calm yourself, dear,' said she, addressing my father; 'you know the least emotion may injure you. Since your daughter comes here in spite of you, and her presence is disagreeable, give me your arm, I will conduct you to the little saloon; and leave our good doctor to make Madam d'Harville understand the imprudence (not to say anything worse) of her conduct.'

"And she cast a significant look at her accomplice. I comprehended the design of my stepmother. She wished to lead my father away, and leave me alone with Polidori, who, in this extreme case, would have doubtless employed violence to force from me the phial, which might furnish an evident proof of his designs. 'You are right,' said my father; 'since she comes and persecutes me even in my own room, without any respect for my wishes, I will leave the place free to her importunacy.' And rising with an effort, he accepted the offered arm, and made some steps towards the small saloon.

"At this moment, Polidori advancing towards me, I drew nearer my father, and said, 'I will explain to you the cause of my unexpected arrival and what is strange in my conduct. I am a widow. I know your days are threatened, father.'

"He walked painfully, with his body bent. At these words, he stopped, stood erect, and looking at me with profound astonishment, cried, 'You are a widow? my days threatened? What does all this mean?'

"'And who dares to threaten the days of M. d'Orbigny, madam?' audaciously asked my stepmother."

"'Who theatens them?' added Polidori.

"'You, sir; you, madam,' I answered.

"'What an insult!' cried my stepmother, advancing towards me.

"'What I say I will prove, madam.'

"'Such an accusation is frightful!' said my father.

"'I shall leave this house at once, since in it I am exposed to such atrocious calumnies!' said Dr. Polidori, with the assumed indignation of a man whose honour was outraged. Beginning to feel the danger of his position, he doubtless wished to fly. As he opened the door, he found himself face to face with Sir Walter Murphy."

Rudolph, stopping a moment, extended his hand to the squire, and said: "Very timely, my old friend; your presence must have been like a thunderbolt to this wretch."

"That is the word, your highness; he became livid, and retreated two steps, looking at me in a kind of stupor; he seemed astounded. To meet me in Normandy at such a moment! he thought it was a dream. But continue, my lord; you will see that this infernal Countess d'Orbigny had also her turn of a thunderbolt, thanks to what you told me of her visit to the quack Brademanté Polidori in the house of the Rue du Temple; for, after all, it is you who act; or, rather, I was only the instrument of your thought."

Rudolph smiled, and went on with the perusal of the letter of Madam d'Harville.

"At the sight of Sir Walter, Polidori was petrified; my stepmother fell from one surprise into another; my father, alarmed at this scene, and weakened by sickness, was

obliged to seat himself in a chair. Sir Walter double-locked the door by which he entered; and, placing himself before the one which opened into another apartment, so that the doctor could not escape, he said to my father, with the most profound respect,—

"'I ask a thousand pardons, my lord, for the liberty I take; but imperious necessity, dictated solely by your interest (as you will soon acknowledge), obliges me to act thus. My name is Sir Walter Murphy, as this wretch can testify, who, at my sight, trembles with fear; I am the confidential adviser of His Royal Highness the Grand Duke of Gerolstein.'

"'It is true,' said Dr. Polidori, confusedly, quite beside himself with alarm.

"'But, sir, what do you come here for? What do you want?'

"'Sir Walter Murphy,' said I, addressing my father, 'comes to aid me in unmasking these wretches, to whose machinations you were near falling a victim.'

"Then, handing to Sir Walter the phial, I added, 'I have had the good fortune to become possessed of this at the moment Dr. Polidori was about administering to my father its contents.'

"'A chemist from the neighbouring town shall analyze before you the contents of this bottle, which I am going to place in your lordship's hands, and if it be proved that it contains a slow poison,' said Sir Walter to my father, 'there can remain no more doubt of the danger you have run, which the affection of your daughter, has happily prevented.'

"My poor father looked at his wife, Dr. Polidori, Sir Walter, and myself in a bewildered manner; his features expressed deep agony. I read upon his careworn face the violent struggle which tore his heart. Without doubt he was resisting with all his strength growing and terrible suspicions, fearing to be obliged to recognise the guilt of my stepmother; at length, concealing his face in his hands, he cried, 'Oh! all this is horrible—impossible! Is this, then, a dream?'

"'No it is not a dream!' cried my stepmother, audaciously: 'nothing is more real than this atrocious calumny, previously concocted, to ruin an unhappy woman, whose sole crime has been consecrating her life to you. Come, come, my friend, let us not remain a second longer here!' added she, addressing herself to my father; 'perhaps your daughter will not have the insolence to detain you in spite of yourself.'

"'Yes, yes, let us go,' said my father, almost wild; 'this is not true—cannot be true: I wish to hear nothing farther; my reason would give way; frightful suspicions would arise in my mind, empoison the few days remaining for me to live, and nothing could console me for such an abominable discovery!'

"My father seemed so suffering, so despairing, that at any sacrifice, I would have put a stop to a scene so cruel for him. Sir Walter divined my thoughts; but, wishing to do full and entire justice, he answered my father,

"'Yet a few words, my lord; you are about to experience the affliction, doubtless very painful, of discovering that a woman whom you believe attached to you by gratitude, has always been a monstrous hypocrite; but you will find certain consolation in the affection of your daughter, who has always been true.'

"'This passes all bounds!' cried my stepmother, in a rage; 'by what right, sir, on what proofs, dare you utter such frightful calumnies? You say the phial contains poison. I deny it, sir; and I will deny it until you prove the contrary; and even if Dr. Polidori might have by accident mistaken one medicine for another, is that a reason to dare to accuse me of having wished, with him as an accomplice—oh! no, no, I cannot finish—an idea so horrible is already a crime. Once more, sir, I defy you to say on what proofs you and madam dare to sustain this frightful calumny,' said my stepmother, with incredible audacity.

"'Yes, on what proofs?' cried my unfortunate father. 'The torture I suffer must be brought to a close.'

"'I have not come here without proofs, my lord,' said Sir Walter. 'And these proofs the answers of this wretch will furnish directly.' Then Sir Walter spoke to Dr. Polidori in German, who seemed to have recovered a little assurance, but lost it immediately."

"What did you say to him?" demanded Rudolph, laying aside the letter for a moment.

"Some significant words to this effect: 'You escaped by flight the sentence pronounced against you in the grand duchy; you live in the Rue du Temple, under the false name of Bradamanté; your present occupation is unknown; you poisoned the count's first wife; three days ago Madam d'Orbigny came to bring you here to poison her husband. His serene highness is in Paris, and has the proofs of all I advance. If you confess the truth, so as to convict this miserable woman, you may hope, not pardon, but some mitigation of the punishment you deserve; you must follow me to Paris, where I will place you in security, until his royal highness decides your fate. Otherwise two things: one, the prince will demand you from the government, or this moment I will send to the neigbouring town for a magistrate; this phial containing poison, shall be placed in his hands; you will be arrested at once, your lodgings in the Rue du Temple searched; you know how much that will compromise you, and French justice shall follow its course. Choose, then.' These revelations, accusations, and threats, that he knew well-founded, succeeding one another so rapidly, confounded this miscreant, who did not expect to find me so well informed. In the hope of lessening

the punishment which awaited him, he did not hesitate to sacrifice his accomplice, and answered, 'Interrogate me—I will tell the truth concerning this woman.'"

"Well, well, my worthy friend, I expected no less from you."

"During my interview with Polidori, the features of Madam d'Orbigny changed their expression of assurance alarmingly, although she did not understand German. She saw, from the increasing dejection of her confederate, from his supplicating attitude, that I had him in my power. In great anxiety, she endeavoured to catch the eye of Polidori, in order to give him courage or to implore his discretion, but he avoided her glances."

"And the count?"

"His emotion was indescribable; with his contracted fingers he clutched, convulsively, the arm of his chair, the perspiration standing on his forehead; he hardly breathed; his burning and glazed eyes were fixed on mine; his agony equalled that of his wife. The continuation of the letter of Madam d'Harville will instruct your highness as to the end of this painful scene."

Rudolph resumed the perusal of the letter. "After a conversation in German, which lasted for some moments, Sir Walter said to Polidori, 'Now answer, was it not madam,' and he pointed at my stepmother, 'who, at the time of the illness of my lord's first wife, introduced you in the house as a physician?'

"'Yes, it was she,' answered Polidori.

"'In order to serve the fearful projects of madam, have you not been criminal enough to render mortal (by your homicidal prescriptions) the slight illness of the Countess d'Orbigny?'

"'Yes,' said Polidori.

"My father uttered a heart-rending sigh, raised his two hands towards heaven, and let them fall, quite overwhelmed. 'Falsehoods and infamy!' cried my stepmother; 'all this is false; they conspire to ruin me!' 'Silence, madam!' said Sir Walter, in an imposing voice; then, continuing to question Polidori,

"'Is it true, that three days ago, madam went to seek you at No. 17, Rue du Temple, where you reside, concealed under the false name of Bradamanté?'

"'That is true.'

"'Did not madam propose to you to come here to murder the Count d'Orbigny, as you had murdered his wife?'

"'Alas! I cannot deny it,' said Polidori.

"At this overwhelming revelation, my father arose on his feet; he showed the door to my stepmother; then, extending his arms towards me, he cried, in a broken voice, 'In the name of your unfortunate mother, pardon me, pardon me! I have caused you much suffering; but I swear to you I was a stranger to the crime which has conducted her to the tomb.'

"And, before I could prevent him, he fell at my feet.

"When Sir Walter and myself raised him, he had fainted. I rang for the servants. Sir Walter took the doctor by the arm, and went out with him, saying to my stepmother, 'Believe me, madam, you had better leave this house before an hour, or I will deliver you up to justice.'

"The wretched woman left the room in a state of alarm and rage, which your highness will easily conceive.

"When my father recovered his senses, all that had taken place appeared like a horrid dream. I was under the sad necessity of relating to him my first suspicions concerning the premature death of my mother—suspicions which your highness's knowledge of the previous crimes of Dr. Polidori, changed into certainty.

"I was obliged also, to tell my father how my stepmother had carried her hatred even to my marriage, and what had been her object in causing me to marry M. d'Harville.

"As much as my father had shown himself weak and blind respecting this woman, just so much he wished to treat her without mercy; he accused himself, with despair, of having been the accomplice of this monster, in giving her his hand after the death of my mother. He wished to give her up to justice; I represented to him the odious notoriety of such proceedings. I engaged him to drive her away for ever from his presence, allowing her just enough for her support, since she bore his name.

"I had great trouble in procuring my father's consent to this; he wished me to turn her out of the house. This mission would be doubly painful; I thought that Sir Walter, perhaps, would act for me. He consented."

"And I consented with joy," said Murphy to Rudolph; "nothing pleases me more than to give to the wicked this kind of extreme unction."

"And what did this woman say?"

"Madam d'Harville had carried her goodness so far as to ask from her father, a pension of one hundred louis for this creature. This appeared to me, not goodness, but weakness; it was bad enough to rob justice of such a dangerous woman. I went to find the count; he coincided entirely with me; it was agreed that we should give, in all, twenty-five louis to the infamous wretch, so that she might subsist until she found employment. 'And what kind of employment can the Countess d'Orbigny find?' demanded she, insolently. 'That's your business; you might be something like a nurse or housekeeper; but, believe me, seek the most humble and obscure calling; for if you have the audacity to tell your title, which you owe to a crime, people will be astonished to see the Countess d'Orbigny reduced to such a condition; they will inquire, and you can judge of the consequences, if you are fool enough to noise abroad the past. Conceal yourself in some distant place; cause yourself to be forgotten:

become Madam Pierre or Madam Jacques, and repent—if you can.' 'And do you think, sir,' said she to me, 'that I shall not claim the advantages secured to me by my marriage contract?' 'Certainly, madam, nothing can be more just; it would be unworthy of M. d'Orbigny not to execute his promises, and not to recognise all that you have done for him, and all you would have done. Sue, sue; address yourself to justice; I have no doubt the decision will be against your husband.' A quarter of an hour after our conversation, the creature was on the road to the neighbouring town."

"You are right; it is painful to allow such a woman to escape with impunity; but the scandal of such a trial for this old man, already so much debilitated, is not to be thought of."

"I have easily persuaded my father to leave Les Aubiers to-day," resumed Rudolph, continuing to read the letter from Madam d'Harville: "too many sad recollections attend him here; although his health is delicate, the journey and change of air may be of service, as the physician says who has taken the place of Dr. Polidori. My father wished that he should analyse the contents of the phial, without informing him of what had passed; he answered that he could only do this at his own house, but that in two hours we should know the result. This was, that several doses of this liquid, prepared with infernal skill, would, in a given time, produce death, without leaving any traces.

"In a few hours I leave, with my father and daughter, for Fontainebleau; we will remain there for some time; then, according to the wish of my father, we return to Paris, but not to my own house; it will be impossible for me to live there after the deplorable accident which has taken place.

"Thus, as I have said, on commencing this letter, events show all that I owe to your highness's solicitude. Warned by you, aided by your advice, strong in the co-operation of your excellent and courageous Sir Walter, I have been able to snatch my father from certain death, and I am assured of the return of his tenderness.

"Adieu! it is impossible for me to say more, my heart is too full; too many emotions agitate it; I should badly express all that I feel.

"D'ORBIGNY D'HARVILLE.

"I open this letter in haste, your highness, to repair a neglect of which I am ashamed. In seeking, by your noble advice, to do some good, I went to the prison of Saint Lazare to visit the poor prisoners; I found there an unfortunate child in whom you are interested. Her angelic sweetness and pious resignation are the admiration of the matron who overlooks the inmates. To inform you where the Goualeuse (such, I believe is her name) can be found, is to request you to obtain her liberty. This unfortunate girl will relate to you by what a concourse of sinister circumstances, carried away from the asylum where you had placed her, she has been thrown into this prison, where she is appreciated by the purity of her conduct. Permit me also to recall to your highness's mind my two future *protégées*, the unhappy mother and daughter—despoiled by the notary Ferrand. Where are they? Have you had any information concerning them? Oh, I pray you endeavour to discover them, so that on my return to Paris I can pay them the debt which I have contracted towards all unfortunates!"

"Goualeuse has, then, left the farm of Bouqueval?" cried Murphy, as much astonished as Rudolph at this new revelation.

"I heard but just now that she was seen coming out of Saint Lazare," answered Rudolph. "I am lost in conjecture; the silence of Madam Georges confounds and distresses me. Poor little Fleur de Marie, what new misfortunes have happened to you? Let a man on horseback be sent off at once to the farm, and write to Madam Georges that I beg her to come at once to Paris. Say also to M. de Graün, I wish an order to enter Saint Lazare. From what Madam d'Harville writes, Fleur de Marie is confined there; but no," said Rudolph, reflecting, "she is no longer a prisoner, for Rigolette saw her come out in company with an aged woman. Can it be Madam Georges? otherwise, who is the woman? Where is the Goualeuse gone to?"

"Patience, my lord; before to-night you shall know all about it. To-morrow you will have to interrogate this scoundrel Polidori; he has, he said, important communications to make to you, but to you alone."

"The interview will be hateful to me," said Rudolph, sadly; "for I have never seen this man since the fatal day—when"—

Rudolph could not finish; he concealed his face in his hands.

"Why consent to what Polidori demands? Threaten him with the French courts, or an extradition on the government; he must resign himself to confess to me what he is only willing to confess to you."

"You are right my good friend; for the sight of this wretch would render still more torturing these terrible recollections, to which are attached so many incurable griefs; from the death of my father to that of my poor little girl—I do not know but the more I advance in life, the more I feel the loss of this child. How I should have adored her! how dear and precious to me had been this fruit of my first love, of my first and pure belief, or, rather, my young illusions!"

"Stay, my lord; I see with pain the increasing sway which these regrets, as fruitless as cruel, have upon your mind."

After a pause, Rudolph said to Murphy: "I can now make a confession to you, my old friend. I love—yes, I love passionately a woman worthy of the most noble and devoted affection. Ah! it is since my heart is opened

anew to all the delights of love, since I am predisposed to tender emotions, that I feel more vividly the loss of my daughter."

"Nothing can be plainer, my lord: and, pardon the comparison, but, in the same manner, as certain men are joyous and benevolent in their intoxication, you are good and generous in your love."

"Yet my hatred of the wicked is also become deep; my aversion to Sarah increases, doubtless with my grief for the death of my child. I imagine that this bad mother has neglected her; that her ambitious hopes once ruined by my marriage, the countess, in her selfish egotism, has abandoned our child to mercenary hands, and that my daughter perhaps died from want of care. It is also my fault; I did not then know the extent of the sacred duties of paternity. When the true character of Sarah was suddenly revealed to me, I should have at once taken my daughter from her, to watch over her with love and solicitude. I ought to have foreseen that the countess could never be more than an unnatural mother. It is my fault, my fault!"

"Grief causes your highness to err. Could you, after such a fatal event had happened, defer for one day the long journey imposed on you—as"—

"As an expiation! You are right, my friend," said Rudolph, sorrowfully.

"Have you heard anything from the countess since my departure, my lord?"

"No: since her infamous accusations, which twice came near proving the ruin of Madam d'Harville, I have no news of her. Her presence here annoys me; it seems that my evil spirit is near me, that some new misfortune threatens me."

"Patience, your highness, patience. Happily, Germany is interdicted for her, and Germany expects us."

"Yes; we will soon depart. At least, during my short stay at Paris, I shall have accomplished a sacred duty: I shall have made some steps more in the worthy path which an august and merciful will pointed out to me for my redemption. As soon as the son of Madam Georges shall be restored to her arms, innocent and free; as soon as Jacques Ferrand shall be convicted and punished for his crimes; as soon as I shall be assured of the future comforts of all the honest and industrious creatures who, by their resignation, their courage, and their probity, have deserved my interest, we will return to Germany—my journey will not have been fruitless."

"Above all, if you succeed in unmasking that abominable Jacques Ferrand, the cornerstone of so many crimes."

"Although the end justifies the means, and scruples should have no weight as regards this scoundrel, sometimes I regret having employed Cecily in his just and avenging reparation."

"She ought to arrive soon."

"She has arrived."

"Cecily?"

"Yes; I did not wish to see her: De Graün has given her very detailed instructions; she has promised to conform to them."

"Will she keep this promise?"

"Everything seems to promise it—the hope of a mitigation of her punishment, and the fear of being sent immediately back to Germany; for De Graün has her well watched; at the slightest misstep he will demand her of the government."

"It is just. She has arrived like an escaped convict; when they know what crimes caused her perpetual imprisonment, they would give her up at once."

"Besides, De Graün was almost alarmed at the sagacity with which Cecily comprehended, or rather, guessed the part, enflaming and yet platonic, she was to play at the notary's."

"But can she be introduced to him as early as you wish, through Mrs. Pipelet? People of the species of Jacques Ferrand are so suspicious."

"I had, with reason, counted on the appearance of Cecily to combat and conquer this suspicion."

"Has he already seen her?"

"Yesterday. From the account given by Mrs. Pipelet, I do not doubt but that he was fascinated by the Creole; he took her at once into his service."

"Come, my lord, our game is won."

"I hope so; a ferocious cupidity, and a savage thirst have led the executioner of Louise Morel to the most frightful misdeeds. It is in them that he will find the punishment of his crimes. A punishment which will not be barren for his victims; for you see the aim of all the efforts of the Creole."

"Cecily! Never did greater depravity, never a more dangerous corruption, never a blacker soul serve to the accomplishment of a project of higher morality, or of a more equitable end; and David, my lord?"

"He approves of all. With all the contempt and horror which he has for this creature, he only sees in her the instrument of a just vengeance. 'If this cursed woman can ever merit any compassion after all the injury she has done me,' said he to me, 'it will be in devoting herself to the punishment of this scoundrel, for whom she must be an exterminating demon.'"

A servant having tapped at the door, Murphy went out, and returned, bringing in two letters, one of which seemed intended for Rudolph.

"It is a line from Madam Georges!" cried he, reading it rapidly.

"Well, Goualeuse?"

"No more doubt," cried Rudolph, after having read the letter; "another mysterious plot. The same evening on which the poor child disappeared, at the moment Madam Georges was about to inform me of the event, a man, whom she did not know, arrived ex-

press on horseback, came to her, as from me, to reassure her, saying, I was informed of the sudden departure of Fleur de Marie, and that some day I would bring her back to the farm. Notwithstanding this notice, Madam Georges, uneasy at my silence respecting her *protégée*, cannot, she writes me, resist her desire to have some some news of her cherished daughter, as she calls the poor child."

"This is strange, my lord."

"For what end should she have been carried off?"

"My lord," said Murphy, suddenly, "the Countess M'Gregor is no stranger to this affair."

"Sarah? What makes you think so?"

"Compare this with her denunciations to Madam d'Harville."

"You are right," cried Rudolph, a new light bursting upon him; "it is evident; I comprehend now; yes, always the same calculation. The countess persists in believing, that by succeeding in breaking every tie of affection, she will make me feel the want of her. This is as odious as useless. Yet such an unworthy persecution must have an end. It is not only against me, but against all who merit respect, interest, and pity, that this woman directs her attacks. You will send M. de Graün at once, officially, to the Countess; he will declare to her that I am advised of the part she has taken in the abduction of Fleur de Marie, and that if she does not give me the necessary information so that I can recover this unhappy child, I shall act without pity, and then it is to justice M. de Graün must address himself."

"From the letter of Madam d'Harville, the Goualeuse must be confined at Saint Lazare."

"Yes, but Rigolette affirms that she saw her free, coming out of this prison. There is a mystery to be cleared up."

"I will go at once and give your highness's orders to Baron de Graün; but allow me to open this letter; it is from my correspondent at Marseilles, to whom I recommended the Chourineur, to facilitate the passage of the poor fellow to Algiers."

"Well! has he gone?"

"Here is something singular!"

"What is it?"

"After having waited at Marseilles a long time for a vessel to depart for Algiers, the Chourineur, who seemed every day more sad and thoughtful, suddenly declared, the day being fixed for his departure, that he preferred to return to Paris."

"How singular!"

"Although my correspondent had, as was agreed upon, placed a considerable sum of money at the disposal of the Chourineur, he only took what was absolutely necessary for him to return to Paris, where he will soon arrive, as they write me."

"Then he will explain to us himself why he has changed his mind; but send De Graün at once to the Countess M'Gregor, and go yourself to Saint Lazare to gain some information concerning Fleur de Marie."

In an hour's time the Baron de Graün returned from the countess's.

Notwithstanding his habitual and official *sang froid*, the diplomatist seemed troubled; hardly had the usher announced him, than Rudolph remarked his paleness.

"Well! De Graün, what is the matter? have you seen her?"

"Oh! my lord."

"What is it?"

"Will your royal highness pardon me for informing you so suddenly of an event so fatal, so unlooked-for, so"—

"The countess is dead?"

"No, my lord, but her life is despaired of; she has been stabbed with a dagger."

"Oh! it is frightful!" cried Rudolph, touched with pity, notwithstanding his aversion to Sarah. "Who has committed this crime?"

"No one knows, my lord; the murder was accompanied by robbery; some one entered the apartment and carried off a large quantity of jewels."

"And how is she now?"

"Her life is almost despaired of, my lord; she has not yet recovered her consciousness. Her brother is in a state of distraction."

"You must go every day to inquire after her, my dear De Graün."

At this moment Murphy returned from Saint Lazare.

"Learn sad news!" said Rudolph to him; "the countess has been wounded! her life is in great danger."

"Oh! my lord; although she is very culpable, yet I cannot but pity her."

"Yes! such an end would be frightful! And the Goualeuse?"

"Set at liberty yesterday, my lord, supposed by the intervention of Madame d'Harville."

"But it is impossible! Madam d'Harville begs me, on the contrary, to make the necessary arrangements to get her out of prison."

"Doubtless; and yet, an aged woman, of respectable appearance, came to Saint Lazare, bringing the order to set Fleur de Marie at liberty. Both have left the prison. This is what Rigolette told me; but this aged woman, who is she? where have they gone to? what is this new mystery? The countess alone can enlighten us; and she is in a state to give us no information. May she not carry this secret with her to the grave?"

"But her brother, Thomas Seyton, could certainly throw some light upon the affair. He has always been her adviser."

"His sister is dying; some new plot is on foot; he will not speak; but," said Rudolph, reflecting, "we must find out the name of the person who applied for her release; thus we can learn something."

"Yes, my lord."

"Try, then, to know and see this person as soon as possible, my dear De Graün; if you do not succeed, put your M. Badinot on the trail; spare nothing to discover the poor child."

"Your highness may count on my zeal."

"My lord," said Murphy, "it is, perhaps, as well that the Chourineur returns; we may need his services for these researches."

"You are right; and now I am impatient to see arrive at Paris my brave deliverer, the gallant 'Slasher,' for I shall never forget that to him I owe my life."

Forced to extend the unfoldings of the evil and good machinations of the Grand Duke Rudolph and his enemies into another volume, we do so, promising that even more singular characters, even more striking actions and engaging scenes will be found in "PART THIRD: NIGHT."

END OF PART II.

THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS.

NIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE NOTARY'S OFFICE.

BRAIN, or heart of the land, which you will, as large cities are, Paris may claim to have nerves, muscles and arteries centering in it, which but few capitals, by right of size, passions, horrors, loves, charms, mysteries, in a word, can reveal. To trace its emotions, impulses, secrets, wounds, cankers, joys, the following pages are devoted.

We must begin by taking up the farther ends of threads which will soon lead us deep into its labyrinths, not without events on the way, only surpassed by those we shall meet in the mazes themselves.

In the year 1819, a singular project, incited by the current stories of left-handed marriages and loving episodes, as in the case of the Prince of Capua, and Miss Penelope Smith, was put into operation by one Sarah Seyton, widow of the Earl of M'Gregor, her brother, the Honourable Tom Seyton, assisted her to the utmost, fully prepared to aid his sister in matrimonially entangling any crown-wearer whomsoever; he was perfectly willing to participate with her in all the schemes and intrigues that might be useful towards the success of her endeavour to become the wife of a sovereign, however humble in possessions and power; but he would far rather have killed the sister whom he so devotedly loved, than he would have seen her become the mistress of a prince, even with the certainty of a subsequent marriage in reparation.

The matrimonial inventory drawn up by Tom, with the aid of the *Almanach de Gotha*, had a very satisfactory aspect. The Germanic Confederation, especially, furnished a numerous contingency of young presumptive sovereigns, the first to whom the adventurers meant to pay attention, being thus designated in the diplomatic and infallible Almanac of Gotha, for the year 1819:

Genealogy of the Sovereigns of Europe and their Families.

GEROLSTEIN.

Grand-duke MAXIMILIAN RUDOLF, born December 10th, 1764. Succeeded his father, CHARLES FREDERIC RUDOLF, April 21st, 1785. Widower, January, 1808, of Louisa, daughter of Prince JOHN AUGUSTUS, of Burglen.

SON,

GUSTAVUS RUDOLF, born April 17th, 1803.

MOTHER,

Grand-duchess JUDITH, dowager widow of the Grand-duke CHARLES FREDERICK RUDOLF, April 21st, 1785.

Tom had sense enough to inscribe first on his list the youngest of the princes whom he desired for his brother-in-law, thinking that extreme youth was more easily seduced than riper age.

The Countess M'Gregor was not only favoured with the introduction of the Marquis d'Harville (a friend of the Grand-duke, to whom he had rendered great services in 1815, and a little of a suitor of the lady's while she was in Paris) and of the British Ambassador in Paris, but with that of her own personal appearance. To rare beauty and a singular aptitude of acquiring various accomplishments, was added a seductiveness all the more dangerous, because she possessed a mind unbending and calculating, a disposition cunning and selfish, a deep hypocrisy, a stubborn and despotic will—all hidden under the specious gloss of a generous, warm, and impassioned nature. Physically, her organization was as deceptive as it was morally. Her large black eyes—which, by turns, languished and beamed with beauty beneath their ebon lashes—could feign to admiration all the kindling fires of voluptuousness. And yet, the burning impulses of love beat not in her frozen bosom; never could a surprise of either the heart or the senses disturb the stern and pitiless schemes of this intriguing, egotistical, and ambitious girl.

Fortunately for her, her plans were assisted by one Dr. Polidori, a learned but hypocritical man, who hoped to be the future Richelieu over the puppet he trusted to convert Prince Rudolf into. The lady and her brother combined with Polidori, against the youthful prince, whose only ally was his true friend, an English baronet, Sir Walter Murphy.

The Countess M'Gregor drove things to the end, and, during a brief absence of the Grand-duke, was secretly married to Prince Rudolf. In time, about to become a mother, the artful woman began to clamour for an acknowledgment of the union. She braved exposure, hoping to force the prince into giving her the station she sought. All was discovered, easily, therefore. But the old duke was all-powerful within his realm: the clandestine union was pronounced null and void, and the Countess expelled. Her latest act of vengeance was to inform Rudolf that their child had died. This was in 1827. But this assurance was on a par with her former falseness: the child, a girl, was handed over to Jacques Ferrand, a miserly notary in Paris, whose housekeeper got rid of it to a rogue known as Pierre Tournemice. When he at last ran to the end of his tether, and was sentenced to imprisonment in the

Rochefort-hulks for forgery, he induced a woman called Gervais, but nicknamed the Screech Owl (Chouette), to take the girl, now five or six years old, who brought the little creature up in the midst of as much cruelty as degradation.

Meanwhile the Countess nursed the idea of wedding Prince Rudolf in a more secure manner. When, in time he became Grand-duke, she was more eager than ever to enjoy what she considered her own. Though he had married, she hoped; and, the second wife having died childless, the Countess M'Gregor followed Rudolf into France, where he travelled *incognito* as Count Duren. As a last resort to force the Grand-duke into her ambitious aims, she sought for a girl of the age that her own would have been, to pass it off as their child. By chance, the woman to whom she applied was La Chouette, and hardly had she spoken of the likeness which the counterfeit would have to bear to the supposed *suppressed* child, than the woman recognized the very girl whom she had kept for years by her, or in view.

Yes, the offspring of Prince Rudolf and the Countess, was a common girl of the town, known as Fleur de Marie (the Virgin's Flower) for her touching, religious beauty, as La Goualeuse (the Songstress) for her vocal ability, and La Pegriotte (Little Thief), out of La Chouette's anger she would not be what she styled her.

She had long shunned her sad sisters in shame, and indeed, in all her life, had known but one friend. This was a sewing girl, known as Rigolette, or Miss Dimpleton, from her continual smiles; a maid with no strong ideas of virtue, but preserved from the miry path which poor Fleur de Marie had been forced to use, merely by being too hard worked to have leisure to be bad.

Prince Rudolf entertained the most profound aversion for the mother of his child, yet for the latter he mourned still, fifteen or eighteen years after her reported decease. Weary of life, save for doing good, he took a deep liking for playing the part of a minor providence, be it said in all reverence.

Known to society as the Grand-duke, otherwise Count Duren, he had humble lodgings in No. 12, Rue de Temple, as a fan-painter, plain M. Rudolf. To mask the large sums which on occasion he dispensed in charity, he was wont to give out that he was the agent of wealthy persons who trusted him in their alms-giving.

Events brought him into immediate contact with Fleur de Marie, and Rigolette (who lived in his own house in the Rue de Temple).

The former he had rescued from her wretchedness and provided with a home on a farm by Bouqueval, whence she had been abducted by Chouette and comrades of hers, by orders of Jacques Ferrand, who wanted her put out of the way.

The wretches who had undertaken to drown the girl with Ferrand's housekeeper (become dangerous to him, as one aware of too many of his secrets) murdered the latter, but the former, swept from their sight by the Seine's current, had been saved by a former prison-mate of hers, a girl of twenty, so wild in manner as to have won the nickname of Louve (Wolf).

Snatched from death, the exhausted girl now lay, but a little this side of life's confines, in the house of Dr. Giffon, at Asnieres, under his care and that of the Count of St. Remy, two gentlemen who had seen her escape.

Rudolf was seeking her all this while, yet not so busily that he forgot his avenger's course. Chief among social oppressors, whose cunning baffled the law, and verified the old saying of 'what is everybody's business is nobody's business,' Jacques Ferrand stood.

He withheld a large sum of money, entrusted *verbally* to him, from its owner, the Baroness Fermont, and impoverished her and her daughter; he had seduced his servant Louise Morel, caused her imprisonment, on a charge of child murder, driving her father, a working jeweller, insane, and menacing the destruction of the whole family—but Rudolf was at hand to support them.

His cashier François Germain also was in prison, thanks to him. The youth—who had saved some money, deposited it with a banker out of town — had no sooner heard that Louise Morel's father was in debt (a means of Ferrand's triumph over the girl), than he gave her some of his employer's money, thinking to replace it with his own immediately after. But, while he was away to draw the deficit from his bankers, the notary discovered the loss, and had him arrested as a thief.

The notary, whose cunning had earned him a high reputation for honesty, strictness, and parsimony, was, at this moment, therefore, at the climax of inward delight. His chief accomplice removed (his only other being the Dr. Polidori already mentioned) he believed he had nothing to fear. Louise Morel had been replaced by a new servant, much more tempting to a man of the notary's sensual cravings, than that first poor victim had been.

We usher the reader, at the clerks' breakfast-time, into the notary's gloomy office.

A thing unheard-of, stupendous, marvellous! instead of the meagre and unattractive stew, brought every morning to these young people by the *departed* housekeeper, Madame Seraphin, an enormous cold turkey, served up on an old paper box, ornamented the middle of one of the tables of the office, flanked by two loaves of bread, some Dutch cheese, and three bottles of sealed wine; an old leaden inkstand, filled with a mixture of salt and pepper, served as a salt-cellar; such was the bill of fare.

Each clerk, armed with his knife and a formidable appetite, awaited the hour of the feast with hungry impatience; some of them were raging over the absence of the head clerk, without whom they could not commence their breakfast pursuant to etiquette.

This radical change in the ordinary meats of the clerks of Jacques Ferrand announced an excessive domestic revolution.

The following conversation, eminently Bœotian; (if we may be allowed to borrow this word from the witty writer who has made it popular), will throw some light upon this important question:

"Behold a turkey who never expected, when he entered into life, to appear at breakfast on the table of our governor's quilldrivers!"

"Just so; when the governor entered on the life of a notary, in like manner he never expected to give his clerks a turkey for breakfast."

"For this turkey is ours," cried Stump-in-the-Gutters, the office boy, with greedy eyes.

"My friend, you forget; this turkey must be a foreigner to you.

"And as a Frenchman, you should hate a foreigner."

"All that can be done is to give you the claws."

"Emblem of the velocity with which you run your errands."

"I think, at least, I have a right to the carcass?" said the boy, murmuring.

"It might be granted; but you have no right to it, just as it was with the Charter of 1814, which was only another carcass of liberty," said the Mirabeau of the office.

"Apropos of carcass," said one of the party. "May the soul of Mother Seraphin rest in peace! for, since she was drowned, we are no longer condemned to eat her everlasting hash!"

"And for a week past, the governor, instead of giving us a breakfast—" "Allows us each forty sous a day."

"That is the reason, I say: may her soul rest in peace."

"Exactly; for in her time, the old boy would never have given us the forty sous."

"It is enormous!" "It is astonishing!"

"There is not an office in Paris—"

"In Europe."

"In the universe, where they give forty sous to a famishing clerk for his breakfast."

"Apropos of Madame Seraphin, who of you fellows have seen the new servant that takes her place?"

"The Alsatian girl whom Madame Pipelet, the porter's wife of No. 17, Rue du Temple, the house where poor Louise lived, brought one evening?"

"Yes." "I have not seen her yet."

"Nor I." "Of course not; it is altogether impossible to see her, for the governor is more savage than ever to prevent our entering the pavilion in the courtyard."

"And since the porter cleans the office now, how can one get a glimpse at his Mary?"

"Pooh! I have seen her." "You?"

"Where was that?" "How does she look?"

"Large or small?" "Young or old?"

"I am sure, beforehand, that she has not so good-looking a face as poor Louise—that good girl!"

"Come, since you have seen her, how does this new servant look?" "When I say I saw her, I have seen her cap—a very funny cap."

"What sort?" "It was cherry colour, and of velvet, I believe; something like those worn by the little broom girls." "Like the Alsatians? it is very natural, since she is an Alsatian."

"You dont say so?"

"But I do! what is it that surprises you? The burnt child shuns the fire!" "Chalamel! what relation between your proverb and this cap?"

"There is none." "Why did you say it, then?" "Because, a benefit is never lost, and the dog is a friend of man?"

"Hold! If Chalamel opens his budget of proverbs, which mean nothing, we are in for it. Come, tell us what your know of this new servant."

"The day before yesterday I was out in the yard; she had her back towards one of the windows of the groundfloor." "The yard's back?"

"What stupidity! No, the servant's. The glasses are so dirty that I could see nothing of her figure; but I could see her cherry-coloured cap, and a profusion of curls, as black as jet; for she wears her hair in short curls."

"I am sure that the Governor would not have seen through his spectacles as much as you did; for here you have one, as they say, who, if he remained alone with a woman on the earth, the world would soon come to an end."

"That is not astonishing. He laughs best who laughs last, and, moreover, punctuality is the politeness of kings."

"How wearisome Chalamel is when he lays himself out to it!" "Tell me what company you keep, and I'll tell you what you are."

"Oh! how pretty!"

"As for me, I have an idea that it is superstition that stupifies the governor more and more."

"It is, perhaps, from penitence, that he gives us forty sous for our breakfast." "The fact is, he must be crazy." "Or sick." "I think for the last two or three days he has been quite wild."

"Not that we see him so much. He who was, for our torment, in his cabinet from morning till night, and always at our backs, now has not, for two days, put his nose into the office."

"That is the reason the head clerk has so much to do." "And that we are obliged to die with hunger in waiting for him." "What a change in the office."

"Poor Germain would be much astonished if any one should say to him, 'Only fancy, my boy, the governor gives us forty sous for our breakfast!' 'Pshaw! it is impossible,' he would say. 'It is so possible that he has

announced it to me, Chalamel, in my own person.' 'You are jesting.' 'I jest! This is the way it occurred: during two or three days which followed the death of Madame Seraphin, we had no breakfast at all. We liked that well enough, for no breakfast at all was better than that she gave us; but, on the other hand, our luncheon cost us money. However, we were patient, and said: 'The governor has got no servant, no housekeeper, and when he gets one, we shall have to live on hash again.' It wasn't so, my poor Germain; the old fellow finally employed a servant, and our breakfast was still buried in the river of oblivion. I was appointed a sort of deputy, to present to the governor the complaints of the stomach; he was with the principal clerk. 'I do not want to feed you in the morning,' said he, in a gruff, surly tone; 'my servant has no time to prepare your breakfast.' 'But, sir, you are bound to give us our morning meal.' 'Well, you may send out for your breakfast, and I will pay for it. How much do you want?—forty sous each?' added he, with some other subject evidently upon his mind, and mentioning, 'forty sous,' in the same manner that he would have said twenty sous, or a hundred sous. 'Yes sir,' I exclaimed, 'forty sous will do,' catching the ball 'on the fly.' 'Let it be so,' answered the notary; 'the head clerk will take charge of the expense, and I will settle with him.' Thereupon the governor shut the door in my face. You must confess, gentlemen, that Germain would be astonished at the extraordinary liberality of the governor."

"Germain would say: The governor is out of his head."

"And forty sous a-head out of his pocket," said Chalamel.

"Well done! the first chemist was right who said: 'Bitter as *Calomel!*'"

"Seriously, I believe that the governor is sick."

"For ten days past, he is scarcely to be recognised. His cheeks are so hollow, that you might thrust in your fist."

"And he is so absent-minded, that it is curious to see him. The other day he took off his glasses to read a deed; his eyes were red as live coals."

"He was right; short reckonings make long friends."

"For heaven's sake, don't cut me with your jaws. I tell you, gentlemen, that it is very singular. It was upside down."

"Which was upside down?—the deed or the governor? It is singular, as you say. What the devil was he doing in that position? I should think it would have given him the apoplexy, unless his habits, as you say, have changed very suddenly."

"How wearisome you are Chalamel! I mean that it was the deed which I presented wrong end foremost."

"How wild he must have been!"

"Not at all; he didn't even perceive it. He looked at it for ten minutes, with his bloodshot eyes fixed upon it, and then he gave it back to me, saying: 'Quite correct.'"

"Still upside down?"

"Still."

"How could he have read the deed?"

"He couldn't, unless he can read upside down."

"No man can do that."

"He looked so gloomy and savage, that I dared not open my lips, and I went away as if nothing had happened.

"I have got something to tell you. Four days ago I was in the office of the head clerk, and in comes one client, two clients, three clients, with whom the governor had made an appointment. They waited impatiently, and requested me to go and rap at the door of the study. I rapped, and, receiving no answer, I walked in."

"Well, what did you see?"

"M. Ferrand lying upon his arms, which were placed upon the table, and his bald head uncovered. He did not stir."

"He was asleep, probably."

"I thought so. I approached him, and said: 'There are some clients outside, who wish to see you.' He did not move. 'M. Ferrand!' No reply. At length I touched his shoulder, and he started up as if the devil had bitten him. His motion was so sudden, that his big glasses fell off from his nose, and I saw—you never can believe it——"

"Out with it. What did you see?"

"Tears!"

"Nonsense!"

"Isn't he a queer bird?"

"The governor weep! Get out of the way!"

'When you see him cry, ladybirds will play on the French horn!"

"And monkeys chew tobacco!"

"Pshaw! your nonsense won't prevent me from knowing what I saw with my own eyes. I tell you I saw him as I have described."

"What! weeping?"

"Yes, weeping. And after that, he was wrath at being caught in such a lachrymose condition, and sung out to me; 'Go away—go away!' 'But, sir——' 'Go away, I tell you!' 'There are some clients in the office, with whom you have made an appointment, sir, and——' 'I haven't the time to see them. Let them go to the devil, and you with them.' Thereupon he arose, as furious as he could be, and looked so much as if he would kick me out at the door, that I didn't wait for the compliment, but hooked it, and told the clients to leave also. They didn't look greatly pleased, I assure you; but for the reputation of the office, I told them that the governor had caught the whooping-cough."

This conversation was now interrupted by the entrance of the principal clerk, who came in as if pressed with business. His appearance was hailed by a general acclamation, and all eyes were turned towards the turkey.

"Without being uncivil, my lord, I must say

that you have detained us from breakfast for a long time," said Chalamel.

"You must look out, for the next time our appetites won't be under such good control."

"It is not my fault, I assure you; I was more impatient than you are--the governor must be mad!"

"That's what I have been saying."

"But the madness of the governor ought not to keep us from eating."

"It should have the opposite effect."

"We can talk just as well with our mouths full."

"A thousand times better," said the office-boy.

Chalamel was carving the turkey, and he said to the principal clerk: "What reason have you for thinking that the governor is crazy?"

"We were inclined to think that he had become perfectly stupid, when he agreed to give us forty sous per head for our daily breakfast."

"I confess that I was as much surprised as you are, gentlemen; but it is a trifle, actually a trifle, compared with what has just occurred."

"You don't say so!" said another.

"Is the notary crazy enough to invite us to dine every day, at his expense, at the Cadran-Bleu?"

"And give us tickets to the play, after dinner?"

"And after that, take us to the *cafe*, to round off with punch?"

"And after that a la—"

"Gentlemen, just as far as you please; but the scene which I have just observed is more frightful than funny."

"Give us the scene, I beg of you."

"That's right; don't trouble yourself about the breakfast—we are all ears."

"And all jaws! I see through you, my pretties! while I am speaking, your teeth will be in motion, and the turkey would be finished before my story. Be patient; I will reserve it for the dessert."

We do not know whether it was the goad of hunger or curiosity that stimulated the mastication of the young limbs of the law, but the breakfast was so rapidly completed, that the moment for the story arrived immediately.

Not to be surprised by the governor, they sent the office boy, on whom the carcass, and claws of the turkey had been most liberally bestowed, as a sentry into the neighbouring room.

The head clerk said to his colleagues, "In the first place, you must know that, for some days past the porter has been alarmed about master's health. As the good man sits up very late, he has seen M. Ferrand go down to the garden in the night in spite of the cold and rain, and walk up and down rapidly. He ventured to leave his nest, and ask his master if he had need of any thing. The governor sent him to bed in such a tone that, since then, the porter has kept himself quiet, and he will keep himself so always, as soon as he hears the governor descend to the garden, which happens every night, no matter what weather."

"The old boy is, perhaps a somnambulist?"

"Not probable; but such nocturnal promenades announce great agitation. I arrive at my story: Just now, I went in to get some signatures. At the moment I placed my hand on the lock, I thought I heard some one speak. I stopped, and distinguished two or three dull cries, like stifled sobs. After having hesitated to enter for a moment, fearing some misfortune, I opened the door."

"Well?"

"What did I see? The governor on his knees, on the floor."

"On his knees?" "On the floor?"

"Yes; kneeling on the floor, his face in his hands and his elbows on the seat of one of his old arm-chairs." "It is very plain. What fools we are! He is so bigoted, he was making an extra prayer."

"In any case, it would be a funny prayer! Nothing could be heard but stifled groans, only from time to time he murmured, between his teeth, "Lord, Lord!" like a man in a state of despair. Seeing this, I did not know whether I ought to remain or retire."

"That would have been also my political opinion."

"I remained, therefore, very much embarrassed, when he rose and turned suddenly. He had between his teeth an old pocket-handkerchief; his spectacles remained on the chair. In all my life I have never seen such a face: he had the appearance of a lost soul. I drew back, alarmed—on my word of honour, alarmed! Then he—"

"Caught you by the throat?"

"You are out there. He looked at me, at first, with a bewildered air; then, letting his handkerchief fall, which he had, doubtless, gnawed and torn in grinding his teeth, he cried, throwing himself into my arms, "Oh! I am very unhappy!"

"Draw it mild!"

"Fact! Well, in spite of his death's-head look, when he pronounced these words his voice was so heart-rending—I would say, almost so soft—"

"So soft? Get out. There is not a rattle, nor Tom-cat with a cold, whose sounds would not be music alongside his voice."

"It is possible; that did not prevent it from being so plaintive at that time that I felt myself quite affected; so much the more as M. Ferrand is not habitually communicative. 'Sir,' said I, 'I believe that.' 'Leave me! leave me!' he answered, interrupting me; 'to tell your sufferings to another is a great solace.' Evidently he took me for some one else."

"So familiar? Then you owe us two bottles of Bordeaux.

When one's master is not proud
One must freely treat the crowd.

It is the proverb that speaks; it is sacred. Proverbs are the wisdom of a nation."

"Come, Chalamel, leave your proverbs

alone. You comprehend, that, on hearing that, I at once understood that he was mistaken, or that he was in a high fever. I disengaged myself, saying, 'calm yourself! it is I.' Then he looked at me with a stupid look."

"Very well! now that sounds like the truth."

"His eyes were wild. 'Eh!' he answered. 'What is it?—who is there?—what do you want with me?' At each question he ran his hand over his face, as if to drive away the clouds which obscured his thoughts."

"'Which obscured his thoughts!' Just as if it were written! Bravo head clerk; we will make a melodrama together.

Who speaks so well, and so polite,
A melodrama ought to write."

"Do hold your tongue, Chalamel. I know nothing about it; but what is sure is, that, when he recovered his senses, it was another song. He knit his brows in a terrible manner, and said to me, with quickness, without giving me time to answer, 'What did you come here for?—have you been a long time here?—can I not be alone in my own house without being surrounded by spies?—what have I said?—what have you heard? Answer, answer.' He looked so wicked that I replied, 'I have heard nothing, sir: I just came in.' 'You do not deceive me?' 'No, sir.' 'Well what do you want?' 'To ask for some signatures, sir.' 'Give me the papers.' And he began to sign—without reading them, a half dozen notarial acts—he who never put his flourish on an act without spelling it, letter by letter, and twice over, from end to end. I remarked that, from time to time, his hand slackened a little in the middle of his signature, as if he was absorbed by a fixed idea, and then he resumed and signed quickly, in a convulsive manner. When all were signed he told me to retire, and I heard him descend by the little staircase which leads from his cabinet to the court."

"I now come back to this: what can the matter matter be with him?"

"Perhaps he regrets Madame Seraphin."

"Oh, yes! *he* regret any one!"

"That reminds me of what the porter said; that the Cure of Bonne-Nouvelle and his vicar had called several times, and were not received. That is surprising!"

"What I want to know is, what the carpenter and locksmith have been doing in the pavilion."

"The fact is, they have worked there for three days consecutively."

"And then one evening they brought some furniture here in a covered cart."

"I give it up! as sung the swan of Cambrai."

"It is perhaps remorse for having imprisoned Germain which torments him."

"Remorse—*he?* It is too hard, and too tough, as the eagle of Meaux said."

"Fie, Chalamel!"

"Speaking of Germain, he is going to have famous recruits in his prison, poor fellow."

"How is that?"

"I read, in the *Gazette des Tribunaux*, that the gang of robbers and assassins who have been arrested by the Champs Elysees, in one of those little subterranean taverns—"

"They are real caverns."

"That this band of scoundrels have been confined in *La Force*."

"Poor Germain, good society for him."

"Louise Morell will also have her part of the recruits; for in the band they say there is a whole family, from father to son and mother to daughter."

"Then they will send the women to Saint Lazare, where Louise is."

"It is, perhaps, some of this band who have attempted the life of the countess who lives near the Observatory, one of our clients. Has not master sent me often enough to know how she is? He appears to be very much interested about her health. Only yesterday he sent me again to enquire how Lady M'Gregor had passed the night." "Well?"

"Always uncertain: one day they hope, the next despair—they never know whether she will get through the day; two days ago she was given up; but yesterday there was a ray of hope; what complicates the matter is, that she has a brain fever."

"Could you go into the house, and see the place where the deed was committed?"

"Oh! by no means! I could go no farther than the gate, and the porter did not seem disposed to walk much, not as—"

"Here comes master," cried the boy, entering the office, with the carcass. Immediately the young men seated themselves at their respective desks, over which they bent, moving their pens, while the boy deposited for a moment the turkey skeleton in a box filled with law papers.

Jacques Ferrand appeared.

Taking off his old silk cap, his red hair, mixed with gray, fell in disorder from each side of his temples; some of the veins on his forehead seemed injected with blood, while his flat face and hollow cheeks were of a livid paleness. The expression of his eyes could not be seen, concealed as they were by his large green spectacles; but the visible alteration of his features announced a consuming passion.

He crossed the office slowly, without saying a word to his clerks, without appearing to notice their presence, entered the room of the head clerk, walked through it, as well as his own cabinet, and descended immediately by the little staircase which led to the court. Jacques Ferrand having left behind him all the doors open, the clerks could, with good reason, be astonished at the extraordinary motions of their master, who came up one staircase and descended another, without stopping in any of the chambers, which he had traversed mechanically.

The Countess M'Gregor, at least, was not his trouble. In showing La Chouette Fleur de Marie's picture, she had exposed her jewels, and to secure them, the hag had poignarded the lady, and decamped.

CHAPTER II.

THOU SHALT NOT LUST.

IT was night.

The profound silence which reigned in the house occupied by Jacques Ferrand, was interrupted at intervals by the sighing of the wind, and by rain, which fell in torrents. These melancholy sounds seemed to render still more complete the solitude of the dwelling.

In a bed-chamber on the first floor, very comfortably and newly furnished, and covered with a thick carpet, a young woman was standing before an excellent fire.

What was very strange, in the centre of the door, which was strongly bolted, and opposite the bed, was placed a small wicket of about five or six inches square, which could be opened on the outside.

A reflecting lamp cast an obscure light in this room, which was hung with garnet-coloured silk; the curtains of the bed, as also the covering of a large sofa, were of silk and worsted damask, of the same colour.

We are minute in these details of furniture, so recently imported into the dwelling of the notary, because it announces a complete revolution in the habits of Jacques Ferrand, who, until then, was of Spartan avarice and meanness (above all as respected others) in all that concerned living.

It is then, upon this garnet tapestry, a strong back-ground, warm in colour, on which is delineated the picture we are going to paint.

Of tall and graceful stature, she is a quadroon in the flower and bloom of youth. The development of her fine shoulders, and of her luxurious person, makes her waist appear so marvellously slender, that one would believe that she might use her necklass for a girdle.

As simple as it is coquettish and provoking, her Alsatian costume is of strange taste, somewhat theatrical, and thus more calculated for the effect that it was intended to produce.

Her spencer of black cassimere, half-open on her swelling bosom very long in the body, with tight sleeves and plain back, is embroidered with purple wool on the seams, and trimmed with a row of small, chased silver buttons. A short petticoat of orange merino, which seems of exaggerated amplitude, although it fits admirably on the contours of sculptural richness, allows a glance at the charming leg of the Creole, in the scarlet stockings with blue clocks, just as it is met with among the old Flemish painters, who show so complacently the garters of their robust heroines.

Never did artist dream of an outline more pure than her limbs; strong and muscular above their full calves; they terminated in a small foot, quite at ease, and well arched in its very small shoe of black morocco, with silver buckles.

She is standing before the glass on the chimneypiece! The slope of her spencer displays her elegant, graceful neck, of dazzling whiteness, but without transparency.

Taking off her cherry-coloured cap, to replace it by a Madras kerchief, the Creole displayed her thick and magnificent hair of bluish black, which, divided in the middle of her forehead, and naturally curled, descended no lower than the junction of the neck with the shoulders. One must know the inimitiable taste with which a Creole twists around her head these handkerchiefs, to have an idea of the graceful appearance, and of the piquant contrast of this tissue, variegated purple, azure, and orange, with her black hair, which, escaping from the close folds, surround, with their large, silky curls, her pale, but plump and firm cheeks.

Her arms raised above her head, she finished, with her slender ivory fingers, arranging a large bow, placed very low on the left side, almost on the ear.

Her features are of the kind it is impossible ever to forget.

A bold forehead, slightly projecting, surmounted a visage of perfect oval; her complexion of a dead white, the satin-like freshness of a camelia imperceptibly touched by a ray of the sun; her eyes of a size almost immoderate, have a singular expression, for the pupil, extremely large, black, and brilliant, hardly allows the transparent pale blue of the eye-ball to be seen from the corners of her eyelids, fringed with long lashes; her chin is perfect; her nose, fine and straight, is terminated by nostrils dilating at each emotion; her lovely impudent mouth is of a lively red.

Let one imagine this pale face, with its sparkling black glances, its red, moist, and glossy lips, which shine like wet coral.

Let us say that this tall Creole, slender, fleshy, strong and active as a pather, was the type of that sensuality which is only lighted up by the fires of the tropics.

Such was Cecily.

She was once the slave of a Louisiana planter, who designed her for his harem. Her lover, a slave named David, resisted that design to the only gain of being flogged, while his loved one was borne away. David was no common black; he had been educated in France, and was the plantation surgeon. The story of this high-handed and two-fold outrage reached Rudolf, whose yacht was on the coast. The prince, landing in the night with a boat's crew, carried of David and Cecily, from the planter's calaboose, leaving a sum of money as indemnity. The two were wedded in France, but Cecily, won away by a very bad man, had become so evil, that her new life was a series of scandals. David would have killed her, but Rudolf, whose physician he had worthily become, induced him to prefer her life-imprisonment in Germany. Out of her dungeon she was brought by Rudolf, who knew no fitter implement with which to chastise the notary.

Her detestable predilections, for some time restrained by her real attachment for David, were only developed in Europe; the civilization and climatical influence of the North had tempered the violence, modified the expression. Instead of casting herself

violently on her prey, and thinking only, like her compeers, to destroy as soon as possible their life and fortune, Cecily, fixing on her victims her magnetic glances, commenced by attracting them, little by little, into the blazing whirlwind which seemed to emanate from her; then, seeing them lost, suffering every torment of a tantalized craving, she amused herself by a refinement of coquetry, prolonging their delirium; then, returning to her first instincts, she destroyed them in her homicidal embrace.

This was more horrible still.

The famished tiger, who springs upon and carries off the prey which he tears with loud roars, inspires less horror than the serpent, which silently charms, attracts by degrees, twists in inextricable folds the victim, feels it palpitate under its deadly stings, and seems to feed upon its struggles with as much delight as upon its blood.

To the foregoing let there be joined an adroit, insinuating, quick mind—an intelligence so marvellous, that in a year she spoke both French and German with the most extreme facility—sometimes even with marked eloquence. Imagine, in fine, a corruption worthy of the courtesan queens of ancient Rome, and audacity and courage above all proof, propensities, diabolical wickedness, and one would have a correct idea of the new *servant* of Jacques Ferrand—the determined creature who had dared to throw herself into the den of the wolf. And yet (singular anomaly), on learning from M. de Graun the provoking *platonic* part which she was to play at the notary's and what avenging ends were to be produced by her artifices, Cecily had promised to perform her part with a will; or, rather, with a terrible hatred against Jacques Ferrand, being very indignant at the recital of his having drugged Louise—a recital it was found necessary to make, in order that she should be on her guard against the hypocritical attempts of the monster. Some retrospective words concerning the latter personage are indispensable.

When Cecily was presented to him by Rudolf's intermediatory, Madame Pipelet, as an orphan over whom she wished to have no control, or care, the notary had, perhaps, been less struck with the beauty of the Creole than fascinated by her irresistible glances, which, at the first interview, lighted a fire which disturbed his reason.

This man, ordinarily with so much self-command, so calm, and cunning, forgot the cold calculations of his profound dissimulation, when the demon of lust obscured his mind. Besides, he had no reason to suspect the protegee of Madame Pipelet.

After his conversation with the latter, Madame Seraphin had proposed to Jacques Ferrand, to take the place of Louise, a young girl almost without a home, for whom she would answer. The notary had gladly accepted, in the hope of abusing, with impunity, the precarious and isolated condition of his new servant.

Finally, far from being suspicious, Jacques Ferrand found, in the progress of events, new motives of security.

All responded to his wishes.

The death of Madame Seraphin rid him of a dangerous accomplice. The death of Fleur de Marie (he thought her dead) released him from the living proof of his crime of child-stealing. He did not fear the Countess M'Gregor now she was wounded, while La Chouette was dead, as we shall relate.

We repeat, no sentiment of suspicion came to counterbalance in his mind the sudden, irresistible impression which he had experienced at the sight of Cecily. He seized, with delight, the occasion to receive into his solitary dwelling the pretended niece of Madame Pipelet.

The character, habits, antecedents of Jacques Ferrand known and stated, the provoking beauty of the Creole, such as we have endeavoured to paint it, some other facts which we will now expose, will cause to be comprehended, we hope, the sudden, frensied passion of the notary, for this seductive and dangerous creature.

Although Jacques Ferrand was never to obtain the object of his wishes, the Creole was very careful not to deprive him of all hope; but the vague and distant hopes which she rocked in the cradle of so many caprices were for him only increased tortures, and rivetted more solidly still the burning chain he wore.

If any astonishment is felt that a man of such vigour and audacity had not had recourse to cunning or violence to triumph over the calculated resistance of Cecily, it must not be forgotten that Cecily was not a second Louise. Besides, the next day after her presentation to the notary, she had played quite another part than the simple country lass, under whose semblance she had been introduced to her *master*, or he would not have been the dupe of his servant for two consecutive days.

Instructed of the fate of Louise by Baron de Graun, and knowing by what abominable means the unfortunate daughter of Morel had become the prey of the notary, the Creole, entering into this solitary house, had taken excellent precautions to pass the first night in security.

The evening of her arrival, remaining alone with Jacques Ferrand, who, in order not to alarm her, affected hardly to look at her, and told her, roughly, to go to bed; she avowed innocently, that at night she was very much afraid of thieves, but that she was strong, resolute, and ready to defend herself.

"With what?" asked Jacques Ferrand.

"With this," answered the Creole, drawing from the ample woollen pelisse in which she was wrapped up, a little dagger, of high finish, which made the notary reflect.

Yet, persuaded that his new servant only feared *robbers*, he conducted her to the room she was to occupy (the former chamber of Louise). After having examined the localities, Cecily told him, trembling, with her eyes cast down, that, from fear, she would pass her night on a chair, because she saw on the door neither lock nor bolt.

Jacques Ferrand, already completely under the charm, but not wishing to awaken the suspicions of Cecily, said to her, in a cross tone,

that she was a fool to have such fears; but he promised that the next day the bolt should be arranged.

The Creole did not go to bed.

In the morning the rotary came to instruct her as to her duties. He intended to preserve, during the first day, a hypocritical reserve towards his new servant, in order to inspire her with confidence; but, struck with her beauty, which, in the broad daylight, seemed still more dazzling, blinded, and carried away by his feelings, he stammered forth some compliments on her figure and beauty.

She, with rare sagacity, had judged, from her first interview with the notary, that he was completely under the charm; at the avowal which he made of his *flame*, she thought she would at once throw off her feigned timidity, and change her mask. The Creole then assumed all at once a bold air. Jacques Ferrand went into new ecstacies on the beauty of features, and the enchanting figure of his new maid.

"Look me full in the face," said Cecily, resolutely; "although dressed as an Alsatian peasant, do I look like a servant?"

"What do you mean to say?" cried Jacques Ferrand.

"Mark this hand—is it accustomed to rude labour?"

And she showed a white and charming hand, with slender and delicate fingers, the long nails polished like agate, but of which the slightly-shaded crown betrayed the mixed blood.

"And is this a servant's foot?"

And she advanced a ravishing little foot, which the notary had not yet remarked, and which he now only desisted from looking at, to regard Cecily with amazement.

"I told Aunt Pipelet just what suited me; she is ignorant of my past life; she thought I was reduced to this position by the death of my parents, and took me for a servant; but you have, I hope, too much sagacity to partake of her error, *dear master?*"

"And what are you, then?" cried Jacques Ferrand, more and more surprised at this language.

"That is my secret. For reasons best known to myself, I have been obliged to leave Germany in this disguise. I wished to remain concealed at Paris for some time. My aunt, supposing me reduced to poverty, proposed my entering your service, spoke of your solitary manner of living, and told me that I would never be allowed to go out. I accepted quickly. Without knowing it, my aunt anticipated my most anxious desire. Who could look for and discover me here?"

"Conceal yourself! what have you done, to be obliged to conceal yourself?"

"Soft offences, perhaps; but this is my secret."

"And what are your intentions, miss?"

"Always the same. Saving your significant compliments on my shape and beauty, I should not, perhaps, have made this avowal, which your penetration had sooner or later provoked. Listen to me, then, my dear master: I have accepted for the moment the condition, or rather, the appearance of a servant; circumstances oblige me to do so. I shall have the courage to play this part to the end. I will submit to all the consequences. I will serve you with zeal, activity, and respect, to preserve my place; that is to say, a sure and unknown retreat. But at the least word of gallantry, at the least liberty you take with me, I leave you—not from prudery, nothing in me, I think, looks like the prude."

And she cast a glance charged with sensual electricity, which reached the very bottom of the notary's soul; he shuddered.

"No, I am not a prude," she resumed, with a provoking smile, which displayed her dazzling teeth: "When love bites me, the *bacchantes* are saints in comparison. But be just, and you will agree that your unworthy servant only wishes to perform honestly her duty as a servant. Now you know my secret, or at least a part of my secret; will you, perchance, act as a gentleman? Do I seem too handsome to serve you? Do you desire to change parts and become my slave? So be it! frankly, I prefer that, but always on this condition, that I shall never go out of the house, and you shall have for me the most paternal attention—that need not hinder you from saying that you find me charming: it shall be the recompense of your devotion and your discretion."

"The sole?" stammered Jacques Ferrand.

"The sole—unless solitude makes me mad; which is impossible, for you will keep me company, and, in your quality as a holy man, you shall exorcise the evil spirit.

"Come, decide, no mixed position; either I will serve you, or you shall serve me; otherwise, I leave your house, and I beg my aunt to find me *another place*. All this must seem strange to you; so be it; but if you take me for an adventurer, without the means of existence, you are wrong. In order to make my aunt my accomplice without her knowledge, I allowed her to think I was too poor to buy other clothes than these. Yet I have, you see, a purse well filled: on this side with gold, on the other with diamonds (and she showed the notary a long, red silk purse, filled with gold, through the meshes of which also shone precious stones). Unfortunately, all the money in the world could not give me a retreat as secure as your house, so isolated by the retirement in which you live. Accept, then one or the other of my offers; you will render me a service. You see, I place myself at your discretion; for to tell you that I conceal myself, is to tell you I am sought for. But I am sure you will not betray me, even if you knew how to betray."

This romantic confidence, this sudden transformation of character, troubled the brain of Jacques Ferrand.

Who was this woman? Why did she conceal herself? Had chance alone conducted her to his dwelling? If, on the contrary, she came there for some secret purpose, what was this purpose?

Among all the hypotheses which this

singular adventure raised in the mind of the notary, the true motive of the Creole's presence never came to his thought. He had not, or, rather, he thought he had not, any other enemies than the victims of his licentiousness and cupidity. Now all of them were in such a condition of trouble or distress, that he could not suppose them capable of spreading a snare of which Cecily was the bait.

And, then, again, for what purpose was it spread?

No, the sudden transformation of Cecily inspired but one fear to Jacques Ferrand: he thought that if this woman did not speak the truth, she was an adventurer, who, believing him rich, introduced herself into the house to cajole him, find him out, and perhaps cause him to marry her. But, although his avarice and cupidity revolted at the idea, he perceived, shuddering, that these suspicions and reflections were too late; for, with a single word, he could put his suspicions at rest by sending this woman away. And this word he did not speak. Already he loved her, after his manner, and passionately. Already the idea of seeing this seducing creature leave his house seemed to him impossible. Already, even, feeling the pangs of a savage jealousy to think that Cecily might bestow on others favours refused to him, he experienced some consolation in saying,

"As long as she is sequestered in my house, no one will possess her."

The boldness of language of this woman, the fire in her eyes, the provoking liberty of her manners, sufficiently revealed that she was not, as she said, a *prude*. This conviction, giving vague hopes to the notary, assured still more the empire of Cecily.

In a word, the licentiousness of Jacques Ferrand stifled the voice of cold reason; he abandoned himself blindly to the emotions which overwhelmed him.

It was agreed that Cecily should be his servant only in appearance: in this manner there would be no scandal; besides, to assure still more the security of his guest, he would take no other domestic; he would himself serve her and himself also; a neighbouring coffee house keeper could bring his repasts. He paid in money the breakfasts of his clerks, and the porter could take care of the office. Finally, the notary ordered to be promptly furnished a chamber on the first floor, according to Cecily's taste. She offered to pay the expense. He opposed it, and expended two thousand francs.

This generosity was enormous, and proved the unheard-of violence of his passion.

Then commenced for this wretch a strange life.

Shut up in the impenetrable solitude of his house, inaccessible to all, more and more under the yoke of his frensied love, no longer attempting to discover the secrets of this strange woman, from master he became a slave; he was the footman of Cecily—he served her at her repasts—he took care of her apartment. Informed by the baron that Louise had been surprised by a narcotic, the creole only drank very pure water, only ate meats impossible to adulterate; she chose the chamber which she occupied, and assured herself that the walls concealed no secret doors.

Besides, Jacques Ferrand soon comprehended that Cecily was a woman not to be surprised with impunity. She was vigorous, agile, and dangerously armed.

Nevertheless, not to allow his passion to flag, the Creole seemed at times touched with his attentions, and flattered by the terrible domination she exercised over him. Then, supposing that by proofs of his devotion and self-denial he could make her forget age and ugliness, she delighted to paint in glowing colours his reward when he should arrive at that success.

At these words of a woman so young and so lovely, Jacques Ferrand felt sometimes his mind wandering; a devouring imagery pursued him, waking or sleeping. The ancient fable of the Nessus' shirt was realized for him.

In the midst of these nameless tortures, he lost his health, appetite, and sleep.

Often, at night, in spite of cold or rain, he descended to his garden, and endeavoured by a rapid walk, to calm his emotions.

At other times, during whole hours, he looked into the chamber where the Creole slept; for she had had the infernal kindness to allow a wicket to be placed in her door, which she often opened, in order that she might almost cause him to lose his reason, so that she could then execute the orders she had received.

The decisive moment seemed to approach.

The chastisement of Ferrand became from day to day more worthy of his sins.

He suffered all the torments. By turns absorbed, lost, out of his mind, indifferent to his most serious interests, the maintenance of his reputation as an austere, grave, and pious man—a reputation usurped, but acquired by long years of dissimulation and cunning—he astonished his clerks by his aberrations, displeased his clients by his refusal to see them, and harshly kept at a distance the priests, who, deceived by his hypocrisy, had been, until then, his most fervent trumpeters.

As we were saying, Cecily was arranging her head for the night before the glass.

On a slight noise coming from the corridor, she turned her face away from the door.

Notwithstanding the noise which she had just heard at the door, Cecily did not the less tranquilly continue her undressing; she drew from her corsage, where it was placed like a busk, a dirk five or six inches long, in a case of black shagreen, with a handle of black ebony fastened with silver, a very simple handle, but perfectly *handy*, not a weapon of mere display.

Cecily took the dirk from its case with excessive precaution, and placed it on the marble chimneypiece; the blade, of the finest Damascus and the best temper, was triangular; its point, as sharp as a needle, had pierced a dollar without blunting it.

Impregnated with a subtle and quick poison, the least wound from this poniard was mortal.

Jacques Ferrand, having one day doubted the dangerous properties of this weapon, the Creole made before him an experiment *in anima vita*, that is to say, on the unfortunate house dog, who, slightly pricked in the nose, fell dead in horrible convulsions.

The dirk placed on the chimney, Cecily, taking off her spencer of black cloth, exposed her shoulders, bosom, and arms, naked, like a lady in ball costume.

According to the custom of most girls of colour she wore, instead of a corset, a second corsage of double linen, which was closely bound around her waist; her orange petticoat, remaining fastened under this white inner waist with short sleeves, composed thus a costume much less severe than the first, and harmonized wonderfully with the scarlet stockings, and the Madras scarf so capriciously twisted around the head of the Creole. Nothing could be more pure, more beautiful, than the contour of her arms and shoulders, to which little dimples gave a charm the more.

A profound sigh attracted the attention of Cecily. She smiled, while rolling around one of her ivory fingers some stray curls which escaped from the folds of the bandanna.

"Cecily! Cecily!" murmured a voice, at once harsh and plaintive.

And at the narrow opening of the wicket appeared the pale, flat face of Jacques Ferrand; his eyes sparkled in the shade.

Cecily, silent until then, began to sing softly in Creole French, a Louisianian air. The words of this melody were soft and expressive. Although restrained, the noble contralto, overpowered the noise of the torrents of rain and violent gusts of wind, which seemed to shake the old house to its foundation.

"Cecily! Cecily!" repeated Jacques Ferrand, in a supplicating tone.

The Creole suddenly stopped, turned her head quickly, and appeared to hear for the first time, the voice of the notary, and approached the door. "How! dear master, you are there?" said she with a slight foreign accent, which gave additional charm to her melodious voice.

"Oh! how handsome you are!" murmured the notary.

"You think so?" answered the Creole: "this bandanna suits my hair?"

"Every day I find you still more handsome."

"And see how white my arm is."

"Monster! go away! go away!" cried Jacques Ferrand, furiously.

Cecily laughed immoderately.

"No, no, this is suffering too much! Oh! if I did not fear death!" cried the notary, in a hollow voice; "but to die—to renounce the sight of you, so handsome. I prefer to suffer, and see you—"

"See me; this wicket is made for that, and, also, that we can talk as friends, and thus charm our solitude? which, in truth, does not weigh heavily, you are so good a *master!* See what dangerous confessions I can make through this door.

"And will you not open this door? Yet see how submissive I am! to-night I might have tried to enter with you into your chamber—I did not."

"You are submissive for two reasons. In the first place, you know that being, from necessity, in the habit of wearing a dirk, I handle with a firm hand this venomous plaything, sharper than the tooth of a viper; you know also, that on the day I complain of you, I shall leave for ever this house, leaving you a thousand times more charmed, since you have been so gracious towards your unworthy servant, as to be charmed with her." "My servant? it is I who am your slave—your slave, mocked, despised."

"That is true enough."

"And does not this touch you?"

"It amuses me. The days, and, above all, the nights, are so long." "Oh! the cursed—"

"No, seriously, you appear so completely bewildered, your features change so sensibly, that I am flattered. It is a poor triumph, but you are the only man here!"

"To hear that, and only be able to consume in powerless rage!" "How little wit you have! never, perhaps, have I said anything to you more tender."

"Scoff—scoff."

"I do not scoff; I have never seen a man of your age so much in love; and, it must be acknowledged, that a young and handsome man would be incapable of such mad passion. An Adonis admires himself as much as he admires us; he loves on the end of his teeth; and then to love him is his due, hardly is he grateful; but to love a man like you, my master, oh! that would be to raise him from earth to heaven; it would be to accomplish his wildest dreams, his hopes the most extravagant. For, in fine, the being who would say to you, 'You love Cecily madly; if I wish it, she shall be yours'—you would believe such a being endowed with supernatural powers, would you not, dear master?"

"Yes, oh! yes."

"Well! if you knew how to convince me better of your passion, I should have, perhaps, the fantasy to play myself, in your favour, this supernatural part. Do you comprehend?"

"I comprehend that you scoff at me still, always, and without pity."

"Perhaps solitude creates such strange fantasies!"

Her tone, until then, had been sardonic; but she pronounced these last words with a serious expression, and accompanied them by a glance which made the notary tremble. "Hush—do not look at me thus; you will make me mad. I prefer that you should say to me *never;* at least, I could abhor you, drive you from the house," cried Jacques Ferrand, who again abandoned his vain hopes. "Yes, for I expect nothing from you. But woe is me! woe! I know you now enough.

You tell me to convince you of my love; do you not see how unhappy I am! Yet I do all I can to please you. You wish to be concealed from every eye: I conceal you, perhaps at the risk of compromising myself; in fine, I do not know who you are; I respect your secret; I never speak to you about it. I have interrogated you on your past life; you have not answered me."

"Well! I was wrong; I am going to give you a mark of blind confidence. Oh! my master, listen to me."

"Once more a bitter joke!"

"No, it is very serious. You must know, you should know, the history of her to whom you give such generous hospitality."

And Cecily added, in a tone of hypocritical and tearful compunction:

"The daughter of a brave soldier, brother of my Aunt Pipelet, I have received an education above my condition; I was seduced, then abandoned, by a rich young man. Then, to escape from the rage of my old father, I fled my native country." Then, laughing heartily, Cecily added: "There, I hope, is a little story very presentable, and, above all, very probable, for it has often been related. Amaze your curiosity with that, while waiting for some revelation more piquant."

"I was very sure that this was a cruel pleasantry," said the notary, with suppressed anger. "Nothing touches you, nothing; what must be done? tell me, at least. I serve you like the meanest valet; for you I neglect my dearest interests; I know no more what I do. I am a subject of laughter for my clerks; my clients hesitate to leave me their business. I have parted with some pious people who used to visit me. I dare not think what the public say of this complete change in all my habits. You do not know, no, you do not know the fatal consequences that my mad passion may have for me. See, now, the proofs of my devotion, my sacrifices. Do you wish more? speak! Is it gold you wish? The world thinks me richer than I am, but I--"

"What would you have me to do with your gold?" said Cecily, interrupting the notary, and shrugging her shoulders. "To reside in this chamber—what good would the gold do me? You have small invention!"

"But it is not my fault if you are a prisoner. Does this room displease you? Will you have it more magnificent? speak, command.

"For what purpose; once more, for what purpose? Oh! if I expected here an adored being I would have gold, silk, flowers, perfumes, all the wonders of luxury; nothing could be too sumptuous, too enchanting.

"Well! these wonders of luxury; say a word and—"

"For what purpose? What should I do with the frame without the picture? The adored being, where is he? oh! my master?"

"It is true!" cried the notary, bitterly. "I am old. I am ugly. I can only inspire disgust and aversion; she loads me with contempt; she scoffs at me, and I have not the strength to drive her away. I have only strength to suffer."

"Oh! the insupportable *cry-baby*; oh! the silly, with his complaints," cried Cecily, in a sardonic and contemptuous tone; "he does nothing but groan and lament, and has been for ten days shut up alone with a young woman, in a deserted house."

"But this woman despises me—is armed—is locked!" cried the notary in a rage.

"Well! overcome the disdain of this woman; cause the dagger to fall from her hand; constrain her to open this door, which separates you from her; and that not by brutal force, which would fail."

"And how then?"

"By the force of your passion."

"Passion! and how can I inspire it?

"Stop, you are but a notary bound up with a sexton; you make me pity you. Am I to teach you your part? You are ugly; be terrible, your ugliness will be forgotten. You are old; be energetic, your age will be overlooked. You are repulsive; be threatening. Since you cannot be the noble horse, who neighs proudly in the midst of his wives, be not, at least, the stupid camel, who bends the knee and crooks the back; be a tiger. An old tiger, who roars in the midst of carnage, has also its beauty; his tigress answers him from the depths of the desert."

At this language, which was not without a sort of bold natural eloquence, Jacques Ferrand shuddered, at the savage and almost ferocious expression of the face of Cecily, who with heaving bosom, expanded nostril, haughty mouth, fixed on him her large black and burning eyes.

Never had she appeared so lovely.

"Speak, speak again!" cried he, passionately; "you speak seriously this time. Oh! if I could—"

"One can do what one wishes," said Cecily, abruptly.

"But—"

"But I tell you that if you wish, repulsive as you are—"

"Yes, I will do it! Try me, try me!" cried Jacques Ferrand, more and more excited.

Cecily continued approaching nearer, and fixing on the notary a penetrating look,

"For a woman loving a handsome youth would know," resumed the Creole, "that she would have an exorbitant caprice to satisfy; that the boys would look at their money if they had any, or, if they had none, to a mean trick, while the old tiger—"

"Would regard nothing, do you understand? nothing. Fortune, honour, he would know how to sacrifice all, he would!"

"True," said Cecily, placing her charming fingers on the bony and hairy hands of Jacques Ferrand, who, for the first time, touched the soft and velvet skin of the Creole.

He became still paler, and uttered a hoarse sigh.

"How this woman would be beloved!" added Cecily, "had she an enemy, whom, pointing out to her old tiger, she would say strike, and—"

"And he would strike," cried Jacques Ferrand, endeavouring to approach the ends of her fingers to his withered lips.

"True, the old tiger would strike," said the Creole, placing her hand softly on his.

"If you would love me," cried the wretch, "I believe I would commit a crime."

"Hold, master," said Cecily, suddenly withdrawing her hand; "in your turn go away, go away, I know you no more; you do not appear to me so ugly now as before; go away."

She retired quickly from the wicket.

The detestable creature knew how to give to her gestures and to her last words an accent of truth so incredible; her look, at once surprised and annoyed, seemed to express so naturally her spite at having for a moment forgotten the ugliness of Jacques Ferrand, that he, transported with frenzied hope, cried, clinging to the bars of the wicket, "Cecily, return, command, I will be your tiger!"

"No, no, master," said Cecily, retreating still farther from the wicket; "and to lay the devil who tempts me—I am going to sing a song of my country. Master, do you hear? without the wind redoubles, the tempest is unchained; what a fine night for two lovers, seated side by side near a sparkling fire!"

"Cecily, return!" cried Jacques Ferrand, in a supplicating tone.

"No, no, presently, when I can without danger; but the light from this lamp hurts my eyes, a soft languor weighs down my eyelids. I do not know what emotion agitates me; a demi-obscurity will please me more; one would say I am in the twilight of pleasure."

And Cecily went towards the chimney, put out the lamp, took a guitar suspended on the wall, and stirred the fire, whose blaze illuminated this large room.

From the narrow wicket where he remained immovable, such was the picture which Jacques Ferrand perceived. In the midst of the luminous horizon formed by the undulating light of the fire, Cecily, in a position full of languor, half reclining on a divan of pink satin, held a guitar, from whence she drew some harmonious preludes.

The blazing hearth shed its rosy light on the Creole, who appeared brilliantly illumined in the midst of the obscurity of the rest of the apartment.

To complete the effect of this picture, let the reader recall to his mind the mysterious and almost fantastic appearance of a room where the fire-light struggles with the long, dark shadows which tremble on the ceiling and walls.

The storm redoubled its violence, its roaring could be heard from within.

While preluding on her guitar, Cecily fixed her magnetic glances on Jacques Ferrand, who, fascinated, could not withdraw.

"Now master," said the Creole, "listen to a song of my country; we do not know how to make verses; we use a simple recitative, without rhyme, and at each pause we improvise a couplet appropriate to the subject; it is very pastoral; it will please you I am sure, master. This song is called the 'Loving Girl!' it is she who speaks."

And Cecily commenced a kind of recitative, much more accented by the expression of the voice than by the modulations of the song. A few soft and trembling chords served as an accompaniment.

This was the song.

Flowers, everywhere flowers.
My lover comes! The hope of happiness enervates and destroys.
Soften the light of day—pleasure seeks a lucid darkness.
To the fresh perfume of flowers my love prefers my warm breath.
The glare of day shall not wound his eyes, for I will keep them closed by my kisses.
My angel, come! My heart beats; my blood burns!
Come, come, come!

These words, chanted with as much ardour as if she had addressed an invisible lover, were, thus to speak, translated by the Creole into a theme of enchanting melody; her charming fingers drew from her guitar sounds full of delicious harmony.

The animated face of Cecily, her veiled and moistened eyes, constantly fixed on those of Jacques Ferrand, expressed all the languor of the song.

Words of love; intoxicating music; inflamed looks; silence; night! all conspired at this moment to disturb the reason of the notary.

He cried, bewildered:

"Mercy! Cecily! mercy! I shall go wild. Hush! I die. Oh! that I were mad!"

"Listen then to the second couplet," said the Creole, preluding anew.

And she continued her pasionate recitative:

If my lover were there, and with his hand touched my soft neck, I should shudder and die.
If he were there, and his hair touched my cheek, my cheek so pale would become red.
My cheek so pale would be as fire.
Life of my soul, if you were there, my parched lips could not speak.
Life of my life, if you were there—expiring—I would ask no mercy.
Those whom I love as I love you, I kill.
My angel, come. Oh! come! My heart beats; my blood burns!
Come, come, come!

If the Creole had accented the first stanza with a voluptuous languor, she poured into these last words all the transports of Eros of old.

As if the music had been powerless to express her wild delirium, she threw the guitar aside, and half rising from the couch, and extending her arms towards the door, she repeated, in an expiring, languishing voice,

"Oh! come, come, come!"

To paint the electric look with which she accompanied these words would be impossible.

Jacques Ferrand uttered a terrible cry.

"O! death—death to him you love so much, to whom you have addressed these words!" cried he, shaking the door in a transport of jealousy.

Active as a tigress, with one bound Cicely was at the wicket, and, as if she had with difficulty dispelled her feigned transports, she said to Jacques Ferrand, in a low, palpitating voice: "Well! I avow I did not wish to return to the door. I am here in spite of myself; for I fear your words spoken just now. *If you say strike—I will strike.* You love me well, then?"

"Do you wish gold—all my gold?"

"No; I have enough."

"Have you an enemy? I'll kill him."

"I have no enemy."

"Will you be my wife? I will espouse you."

"I am married."

"But what do you wish, then! what *do* you wish?"

"Prove to me that your passion for me is blind, furious, that you will sacrifice everything for me!"

"All! yes, all! But how?"

"I do not know; but there was a moment when the glance of your eye bewildered me. If now, you give me some proof of your love, I do not know of what I should be capable! Hasten! I am capricious; to-morrow the impression of this hour will perhaps be effaced."

"But what proof can I give you on the moment?" cried the wretch. "It is an atrocious torment! What proof? Speak! What proof?"

"You are only a fool!" answered Cecily, retreating from the wicket with an appearance of extreme irritation. "I am mistaken! I thought you capable of energetic devotion! Good-night. It is a pity—"

"Cecily! oh! do not go—return. But what must I do? tell me, at least. Oh! my senses wander. What must I do? what do?"

"Guess!"

"But, in fine—speak! what do you wish?" cried the notary, quite beside himself.

"Guess." "Explain—command."

"Ah! if you love me as passionately as you say, you will find the means. Good-night."

"Cecily!" "I am going to shut this wicket—instead of opening the door—"

"Mercy? listen—remain—I have found it." cried Jacques Ferrand, after a moment's pause, with an expression of joy impossible to describe. The wretch was seized with a vertigo. He lost all prudence, all reserve; the instinct of moral preservation abandoned him.

"Well! this proof of your love?" said the Creole: who, having approached the chimney, took hold of her knife, and returned slowly towards the wicket.

Then, without being seen by the notary, she assured herself of the action of a small chain, one end of which was fastened to the door, the other to the doorpost.

"Listen," said Jacques Ferrand, in a hoarse and broken voice; "listen. If I place my honour, my fortune, my life, at your mercy—here—on the spot—will you then believe I love you? This proof of an insane passion will it suffice?"

"Your honour, your fortune, your life? I do not comprehend." "If I confide to you a secret which would place me on the scaffold?"

"You a criminal? You jest. And your austerity?" "A lie?" "Your probity?" "A lie." "Your piety?" "A lie." "You pass for a saint, and you would be a demon! You are a boaster! No; there is no man quite cunning enough, bold enough, thus to insinuate himself into the confidence and respect of men. It would be a frightful defiance cast in the face of society."

"I am this man! I have thrown this taunt, this defiance, in the teeth of society!" cried the monster, in an access of frightful pride.

"Jacques! Jacques! do not speak thus," said Cecily. "You will make me mad!"

"My head for your love—do you wish it?"

"Oh! this is love, indeed!" cried Cecily, "Here—take my poniard; you disarm me."

Jacques Ferrand took, through the wicket, the dangerous weapon with precaution, and threw it from him in the corridor.

"Verily—you believe me, then?" cried he in transport.

"I believe you?" said the Creole, leaning with force her charming hands on those of Jacques Ferrand. "Yes, I believe you; for I see again your look of just now—that look which fascinated me. Your eyes sparkle with savage ardour, Jacques, I love your eyes!"

"Cecily!!!"

"You should speak the truth."

"I speak the truth! Oh! you shall see."

"Your countenance is lowering. Your expression formidable. Hold, you are as fearful and beautiful as a mad tiger. But you speak the truth, do you not?"

"I have committed crimes, I tell you."

"So much the better, if by their avowal you prove your love."

"And if I tell you all?"

"I grant all; for if you have this blind confidence in me—do you see, Jacques—it will no longer be the ideal lover of the song I call. It is to you, my tiger, you, that I shall say come—come—come."

"Oh, you will be mine. I shall be your tiger," cried he; "and then, if you will, you shall dishonour me—my head shall fall. My honour, my life, all is yours now."

"Your honour?"

"My honour! Listen: ten years since an infant was confided to my care, and two hundred thousand francs for its support; I have abandoned this child. I spread the report the child was dead, and I kept the money."

"It was bold and skilful—who would have thought it of you?"

"Listen again: I hated my cashier, François Germain. One night he took from me a little gold, which he returned the next day; but to ruin him, I accused him of having robbed me of a considerable sum. I was believed, he was thrown into prison. Now my honour is at your mercy?"

"Oh! you love me, Jacques, you love me. To inform me thus of your secrets—what empire I must have over you? I will not be ungrateful;

let me kiss this forehead, where so many infernal thoughts were created."

"Oh!" cried the notary, stammering, "if the scaffold stood there, ready, I would not draw back. Listen again: This child, Fleur de Marie, once abandoned, crosses my path—she inspires me with fears; I have had her killed."

"You? How? where?"

"A few days since—near Asnieres Bridge, by Ravageurs Island. One named Martial drowned her in a boat. Are these details sufficient? do you believe me?"

"Oh! demon from hell: you alarm, yet attract me. You inspire me. What is, then, your power?"

"Listen again: Before that a man had confided to me a hundred thousand crowns. I set a trap for him. I blew his brains out. I proved that he committed suicide, and I denied the deposit which his sister the Baroness de Fermont reclaimed. Now my life is at your mercy—open."

"Jacques, I adore you!" said the Creole, with warmth.

"Oh! come a thousand deaths, and I'd dare them!" cried the notary, in an intoxication impossible to describe. "Yes, you are right; were I young and charming, I should not experience this triumphant joy. The key! throw me the key! draw the bolt!"

The Creole took the key from the lock, and handed it to the notary through the wicket, saying, "Jacques, I am mad!"

"You are mine, at length!" cried he, with a savage roar, turning the key in the lock.

But the door, fastened with a bolt, did not open.

"Come, my tiger! come," said Cecily, in an expiring voice.

"The bolt! the bolt!" cried Jacques Ferrand.

"But if you deceive me," cried the Creole, suddenly, "If these secrets are an invention, to cajole me—"

The notary remained for a moment struck with stupor: he thought he had succeeded; this last difficulty raised his impatient fury to its climax.

He thrust his hand quickly in his bosom, opened his waistcoat, broke with violence a small chain of steel, to which was suspended a small, thin pocket-book, took it, and showing it through the wicket to Cecily, he said, in an oppressed and breathless tone,

"Here is what would cause my head to fall! draw the bolt—the book is yours."

"Give it to me, my tiger," cried Cecily,

And hastily drawing the bolt with one hand, with the other she seized the book.

But Jacques Ferrand did not abandon it until the moment he felt the door ceding to his efforts.

But though the door ceded, it was only for about six inches, confined, as it was, by the chain above mentioned. At this unforeseen obstacle, Jacques Ferrand threw himself against the door, and shook it with a desperate effort. Cecily, with the rapidity of thought, put the wallet between her teeth, opened the window, threw a cloak into the court, and with great dexterity making use of a cord previously fastened to the balcony, she let herself down into the court, as rapidly and lightly as an arrow falls to the ground.

Then, wrapping herself up in haste in the mantle, she ran to the porter's lodge, opened it, drew the bolt, went out into the street, and jumped into a carriage, which, since her residence at Jacques Ferrand's, was sent every night by order of Baron de Graun, stationed not twenty steps from the notary's mansion.

This carriage was quickly driven off, drawn by two stout horses. It reached the boulevard before Jacques Ferrand had perceived the flight of Cecily.

Let us return to this monster.

Through the opening of the door it was impossible for him to see the window by which the Creole had escaped. With one mighty effort with his broad shoulders, he burst the chain which confined the door, and rushed into the chamber, and found no one.

The cord waved in the wind, as he leaned from the balcony. Then, from the other side of the court, by the light of the moon, which burst forth at intervals from the driving clouds, he saw the gate open.

In a moment he divined everything.

A last ray of hope remained.

Vigorous and determined, he sprang over the balcony, using the cord in his turn, lowered himself into the court, and rushed out of the house.

The street was deserted—he was alone.

He heard no other noise than the distant rolling of the carriage which was rapidly carrying off the Creole. The notary thought it was some belated vehicle, and attached no importance to this circumstance.

Thus, for him no chance remained of finding Cecily, who carried off with her the proofs of his crimes!!!

On this frightful certainty, he fell, thunderstruck on his own threshold.

He remained there a long time, dumb, immovable, petrified. With wan eyes, his teeth compressed, his mouth foaming, tearing mechanically with his nails his breast, he felt his reason totter, and was lost in an abyss of darkness. When he awoke from his stupor, he walked heavily, and with an ill-assured step; objects trembled in his sight; he felt as if recovering from a fit of intoxication.

He shut with violence the street door, and re-entered the court. The rain had ceased, but the wind continued to blow with violence, chasing the heavy-laden clouds, which veiled, without concealing, the light of the moon.

Slightly calmed by the brisk and cold air of the night, Ferrand, hoping to combat his internal agitation by the rapidity of his walk, plunged into the obscure walks of his garden, marching with rapid strides, and from time to

time striking his forehead with his clenched fists.

Walking thus at hazard, he reached the end of a walk near a greenhouse in ruins.

Suddenly he stumbled violently over a mound of earth newly raised. He stooped, and looked mechanically on some linen stained with blood.

He was near the grave where Louise Morel buried her dead child. Her child—also the child of Jacques Ferrand!

Notwithstanding his obduracy, notwithstanding the frightful fears which agitated him, Jacques Ferrand shuddered with alarm.

There was something supernatural in this stumbling-block. Pursued by the avenging punishment of his *vice*, chance carried him to the grave of his child—unhappy fruit of his violence. Under any other circumstances, Jacques Ferrand would have trampled on this sepulchre with atrocious indifference; but having exhausted his savage energy in the scene we have related, he was seized with a weakness and sudden alarm. His face was covered with an icy sweat, his trembling knees shook under him, and he fell lifeless across this open grave.

CHAPTER III.

LA FORCE.

THE interior of a prison is a frightful pandemonium—a sad *thermometer* of the state of society, and an instructive study.

In a word, the varied physiognomies of all classes of prisoners, the relations of family or affection which connects them still to the world, from which the prison walls separate them, have appeared to us worthy of regard.

The reader will, then, excuse us for having grouped around several of the prisoners, personages to be known in this tale, and other secondary figures, destined to place in active relief, certain critical events necessary to complete this initiation into prison life.

Let us enter *La Force*.

There is nothing gloomy, nothing sinister in the aspect of this house of detention.

In the middle of one of the first courts are to be seen some mounds of earth, planted with shrubbery, at the foot of which are already shooting forth some precocious cowslips and snowdrops; a trellised doorway leads to one of the seven or eight exercise-grounds destined for the prisoners.

The vast buildings surrounding this court resemble much a barrack or manufactory, kept with extreme neatness. They are built of limestone, with lofty windows, in order to allow a free circulation of air. The steps and pavement of the yard are of scrupulous cleanliness. On the ground floor, vast halls, heated during winter, and well aired during summer, serve during the day as a place for conversation, workshops, or refectories. The upper stories are used as immense sleeping apartments, ten or twelve feet in height, with shining floors; they are furnished with two rows of iron bedsteads, excellent beds, composed of a soft and thick mattress, a bolster, sheets of white linen, and a warm woollen covering.

At the sight of these accommodations, uniting all the requisites of comfort and salubrity, a stranger is much surprised, accustomed as he is to suppose all prisons as sorrowful, dirty, unhealthy, and gloomy.

He is mistaken.

Sad, dirty, and gloomy are the holes where so many poor and honest workmen languish exhausted, forced to abandon their beds to their infirm wives, and to leave with powerless despair their half starving, naked children, struggling with the cold, in the infectious straw.

There is some contrast between the physiognomies of the inhabitants of these two dwellings.

Incessantly occupied with the wants of his family, to whom the day is hardly long enough, seeing a mad perversity reducing his salary, the artisan will be cast down and worn out; the hour of repose will not be sound to him; a kind of sleeplike lassitude alone interrupts his daily toil. Then on awaking from this mournful drowsiness, he will find himself overwhelmed with the same racking thoughts of the present, with the same inquietudes for the morrow.

But if, hardened by vice, indifferent to the past, happy with the present, certain of the future (he can assure himself of it by an offence or crime), regretting his liberty without doubt, but finding large compensation in the personal well-being he enjoys, certain to carry away with him on his release a good sum of money, gained by moderate and easy labour, esteemed, or, may be, feared by his companions, either for his impudence or perversity, the convict, on the contrary, will be almost always careless and gay.

Once more: what does he want?

Does he not find in prison good shelter, good bed, good food, good pay, easy labour, and, above all and before all, *a society to his taste*; a society, let us repeat, which measures his merit by the magnitude of his offences?

A hardened criminal, then, knows neither poverty, hunger, nor cold. What matters to him the horror he inspires in honest men?

He does not see them—he knows none.

His crimes are his glory, influence, and strength with the bandits among whom he will henceforth pass his life. How can he fear shame?

Instead of grave and charitable remonstrances, which might force him to blush and to repent, he hears savage plaudits, which encourage him to robbery and murder. Scarcely imprisoned, he meditates new misdeeds.

What is more logical?

If he is discovered, arrested anew, he will find repose, the personal care of the prison, and his joyous and bold companions in crime and debauchery.

In his corruption less great than that of the

others? does he manifest, on the contrary, the slightest remorse that he is exposed to atrocious railings, infernal shouts, terrible threats?

In fine—a thing so rare that it has become an exception to the rule—should a condemned man come out of this frightful pandemonium with a firm resolution to reform by prodigies of labour, courage, patience, and honesty, and be able to conceal his past offences, a meeting with one of his old prison companions would be sufficient to overturn his plan of reformation so carefully designed.

In this way—

A hardened ticket-of-leave proposes a job to a repentant one; the latter, in spite of dangerous threats, refuses the criminal association; immediately an anonymous communication strips the veil from the past life of this unfortunate, who wishes, at any sacrifice, to conceal and expiate a first fault by honourable conduct.

Then, exposed to the contempt, or, at least, the suspicion of those whose interest he had obtained by force of industry and probity, reduced to distress, soured by injustice, carried away by want, yielding, in fine, to these fatal derelictions, this man, almost restored, falls back again, and for ever, to the bottom of the abyss from whence he had with so much difficulty escaped.

In the following scenes we shall endeavour, then to show the monstrous and inevitable consequences of promiscuous confinement.

After ages of barbarous proofs and pernicious doubts, it begins to be understood how unreasonable it is to plunge into an atmosphere abominably vitiated, people whom a pure and salubrious air might have saved.

How much time shall be required to find out that, to associate gangrened beings is to redouble the intensity of their corruption, which thus becomes incurable?

How long to find out that there is but one remedy to this growing leprosy, which threatens the body social?

Solitary confinement!

We should esteem ourselves happy if our feeble voice could be, if not counted, at least heard, among all those which, more imposing, more eloquent than ours, demand, with so just and so impatient an importunity, the complete, absolute adoption of the *solitary system*.

Some day also, perhaps, society will know that evil is an accidental, not organic malady; that criminals are almost always good in substance, but false and wicked through ignorance, selfishness, or negligence of those governing; and that the health of the soul, like that of the body, is invincibly subordinate to the laws of a "hygiene" at once salubrious and preservative.

God gives to all along with healthful organs, energetic appetites, and the desire of comfort; it is for society to modify and satisfy these wants.

The man who only has as his share strength, good-will, and health, has the *right*, sovereign *right*, to a labour justly remunerated, which will assure him, not the superfluities, but the necessaries of life, the means to be healthy and robust, active and industrious, therefore honest and virtuous, because his condition will be happy.

The dismal regions of misery and ignorance are peopled with beings of sorrowful hearts. Cleanse these sewers, spread there the inclination to labour, equitable salaries, just rewards, and soon these sickly faces, these broken hearts, will be brought back to virtue, which is the life and health of the soul.

We will conduct the reader to the visitors' room of the prison.

It is an obscure apartment, separated down its whole length into two equal parts by a narrow, railed passage.

One part communicates with the interior, destined for the prisoners.

The other communicates with the office; destined for strangers admitted to visit the prisoners.

These interviews and conversations take place through the double grating of iron, in presence of a warder, who remains inside, at the extremity of the passage.

The appearance of the prisoners, assembled in the visiting room on this day, offered numerous contrasts: some were covered with wretched vestments; some seemed to belong to the working class; others, again, to the well-to-do class.

The same contrast of condition was observable among the persons who came to see the prisoners; they were almost all of them women. Generally the prisoners appear less sad than the visitors; for strange as it may appear, it is proved by experience, there are few sorrows and little shame which resist three or four days of imprisonment passed in company.

Those who are most alarmed at this hideous communion are soon habituated; the contagion reaches them; surrounded by degraded beings, hearing only infamous words, a kind of ferocious emulation drags them on, and either to impose upon their companions by rivalling their obduracy, or to stupify themselves by this moral intoxication, almost always the newly-arrived show as much depravity and insolent gaiety as the old hands.

Let us return to the visitors' room.

Notwithstanding the humming noise of a great number of conversations carried on in a low tone, from one side of the passage to the other, prisoners and visitors succeeded, after some practice, in being able to converse among themselves—on the absolute condition not to allow themselves, for a moment, to be distracted or occupied with the conversation of their neighbours, which created a kind of secret in the midst of all this noisy exchange of words, each one being forced to hear, but not to listen, to a word of that which was spoken around him.

Among the prisoners summoned to the visitors' room, and the farthest from the place where the guardian was seated, was one whom we will particularize.

To the sad state of dejection he was in on his arrest, had succeeded impudent assurance. Already the contagious and detestable influence of imprisonment *in common* bore its fruits.

Without doubt, if he had been immediately transferred to a solitary cell, this wretch, still under the blow of his first detection, the thought of his crimes constantly before him, alarmed at the punishment which awaited him, might have experienced, if not repentance, at least a salutary alarm, from which nothing might have distracted him.

And who knows what effect may be produced on a criminal by an incessant, forced meditation on the crimes which he had committed, and their punishment?

Far from this, thrown into the midst of a ruffianly crowd in whose eyes the least sign of repentance is cowardice, or, rather, *treachery*, which they dearly expiate, for, in their savage obduracy, and in senseless distrust, they look upon as a spy every man (if there should be such a one) who, sad and mournful, regretting his fault, does not partake of their audacious thoughtlessness, and shudders at their contact.

Thrown among the bandits, this man knowing, for a long time and by tradition, the manners and ways of prisons, overcame his weakness, and wished to appear worthy of a name already celebrated in the annals of robbery and murder.

For it had been to him, Nicholas Martial, that Ferrand had applied when the idea struck him to be rid of his housekeeper and Fleur de Marie at a blow.

His family were what are called ravageurs, that is dredgers, living on what they could pick up out of the mud of the Seine. At least they were openly these, but, secretly, they were river pirates, "lumpers," "light horsemen," housebreakers, and bravoes. The father had perished on the scaffold. His widow forty-five years old was confirmed in crime, stern, hard, coldly cruel, and bent on training all her children up into the life which would most revenge on society the slaying of her husband. One son, Ambrose, had been sold by Bras-Rouge (Red-Arm), a tavern keeper and fence, and now languished in the Rochefort-hulks. The eldest son, known as Martial, being head of the family, was a poacher, a fisherman at unlawful seasons, but not irreclaimably bad.

The youngest children, Francois and Amandine, were not yet spoilt by evil surroundings.

To this family, who added to their evil income by keeping a thieves' resort in their house on Ravageurs' Island, La Chouette had applied for the murdering of Fleur de Marie. Nicholas and his sister, known as Calabash (from her yellow complexion) had succeeded in drowning Ferrand's housekeeper only. But, believing they had fulfilled the two-fold bargain, they had gone off rejoicing with their mother, to meet La Chouette, report their success and join in a fresh atrocity. This new crime, the robbery and murder of a diamond-dealer in Red Arm's public house, was frustrated by the landlord's secret connexion with the police. They had made their descent just as the jewel-broker was in the villains' hands, and arrested the whole gang. Bras Rouge (taken to prevent his fellows suspecting his treachery), Nicholas Martial, and a scamp named Barbillon, were put in La Force, widow Martial and Calabash in Saint Lazare. Another capture, a ruffian, called the Maitre d'Ecole (Schoolmaster) from his caligraphic abilities, who had killed La Chouette in a fit of madness, was put in the Conciergerie Prison, in a cell for the insane.

To return to Nicholas Martial in La Force. Some veteran gallows birds had known his executed father, others, his brother, the galley-slave: he was received and immediately patronized by these revellers in crime, with savage interest.

This paternal reception from murderer to murderer exhilarated the widow's son, these praises bestowed on the hereditary perversity of his family intoxicated him. Soon forgetting, in this hideous thoughtlessness, the future which menaced him, he only remembered his past misdeeds but to exaggerate them and glorify himself in the eyes of his companions. The expression, then, of his face, was as impudent as his visitor's was uneasy and concerned. This individual was one Micou, a receiver, dwelling in the Passage de la Brasserie, to whose house Madame de Fermont and her daughter, victims of the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand, had been obliged to retire.

Micou knew to what punishment he was subject, for having several times acquired at a miserable price, the fruits of Nicolas's robberies, and of several others.

He being arrested, the receiver found himself almost at the discretion of the bandit, who could point him out as his habitual fence. Although this accusation might not be sustained by flagrant proofs, it was not the less very dangerous for Micou: so he had immediately executed the orders which Nicholas had sent him by a prisoner, whose time had expired.

"Well! how do you get on Daddy Micou?" said the thief.

"To serve you, sir," answered the receiver, eagerly. "As soon as I saw the person you sent me, right away I—"

"Stop! why do you speak so loftily, Micou?" said Nicolas, interrupting him, with a sardonic air. "Do you despise me because I am in quod?"

"No, I despise no one," said the receiver, who did not care to make public his past familiarity with this wretch.

"Well, then, speak as usual, or I shall believe you have no friendship for me, and that would break my heart." "As you like," said Micou, sighing. "I have busied myself with all your little commissions."

"Well spoken, Micou: I knew well that you would not forget friends. The weed?"

"I have left two pounds at the office, my lad."

"Is it good?" "None better."

"And the ham?" "Also left there, with a quartern loaf. I have added a little surprise you did not expect—half-a-dozen hard boiled eggs and a fine Dutch cheese."

"That's what I call acting like a pal! And wine?"

"There are six bottles, sealed; but, you know they will only give you one bottle a day."

"What would you have? one ought to be content with that."

"I hope you are satisfied with me, my friend?"

"Certainly; and shall be still, and shall be again, Daddy Micou, for this ham, cheese, eggs, and wine, will only last the time to swallow them; but, when there is no more, there will come some more, thanks to Daddy Micou, who will give me some more sugar-plums, if I am a good boy."

"How? you wish—"

"In two or three days you would renew my little provision, Micou."

"May the devil burn me if I do—It is all very well for once."

"Good for once! Come, come; ham and wine are good always, you know that well enough."

"It is possible—but I am not obliged to feed you with dainties."

"Oh, Micou! it is wrong, it is unjust, to refuse ham to me, who has so often brought you fat tripe (sheet lead)!"

"Hush!" said the alarmed receiver.

"No; I'll make the beak decide; I will tell him. Imagine that, Daddy Micou—"

"Good, good! cried the receiver, seeing with as much fear as anger, Nicholas was disposed to abuse the position which their dealings gave him; "I consent—I will replenish your stock of provisions when they are exhausted."

"It is just—nothing but just. Neither must you forget to send some coffee to my mother and Calabashe, who are at Saint Lazare; they used to take their cup every morning—they will feel the want of it."

"Still more? but, do you mean to ruin me, lad?"

"As you please, old Micou: let us speak no more about it. I will ask the big wig if—"

"Agreed, then, for the coffee," said the receiver, interrupting him. "But may the devil take you! cursed be the day I knew you."

"My old man, as for me, it is just the contrary. At this moment, I am delighted to know you. I venerate you as my foster-father."

"I hope that you have nothing more to order?" answered Micou, with bitterness.

"Yes! tell my mother and sister that, though I trembled when I was arrested, I tremble no more, and that I am now as bold as both of them."

"I will tell them. Is that all?"

"Stop! I forgot to ask for two pair of warm woollen stockings—you do not wish me to take cold, do you?"

"I wish you were froze!"

"Thank you, Micou, that shall be later; at present, I prefer something else. I wish to pass life calmly—at least, if they do not make me a head shorter, like father, I shall have enjoyed life."

"Your life is very pleasant!"

"It is superb! Since I have been here, I have amused myself like a king. If there had been lamps and guns, there would have been an illumination and a salvo in my honour, when it was known that I was the son of the famous Martial!"

"It is touching. Beautiful relationship!"

"Hold! there are many dukes and marquisses; why, then, should not we of the oldest family have our nobility?" said the thief, with savage irony.

"Yes, Jack Ketch gives you your letters of nobility in Palace Square!"

"Very sure that it is not the parson! So much the more reason in prison one should be of high Toby nobility, otherwise you are looked upon as a nobody. You ought to see how they treat those mere fogle-hunters, and who do their—Hold! there is one here named Germain, a young man who plays the disgusted, and seems to despise us. Let him take care of his skin. He is a sneak; he is suspected of being a spy. If this is so they will slit his nose, by way of warning."

"Germain? A young man called Germain."

"Yes. Do you know him? He is, then, in the family line, notwithstanding his innocent looks?"

"I do not know him. But if it is the Germain of whom I have heard speak, his look out is good."

"How?" "He once escaped a snare which Velu and the Big Cripple laid for him."

"Why did they do it?"

"I don't know. They said that down among the yokels he had sold one of their band."

"I was sure of it. Germain is a spy. Well! I will tell this to my friends; that will give them an appetite. Does the Big Cripple still play tricks on your lodgers?"

"I am rid of the villain! you will see him here to-day or to-morrow."

"Bravo! we shall have a laugh! He's another who never looks glum!"

"Because he is going to meet Germain here, is why I said his account was good—if he is the same—"

"And why has the Cripple been nabbed?"

"For a robbery committed with a lagger (released convict) who wished to remain honest and labour. Oh, yes! the Big Cripple nicely fixed him; he is so wicked. I am sure it was he who forced the trunk of two women who occupy my fourth floor."

"What women? Oh! the two, the youngest of whom was so handsome, old brigand."

"Oh, yes; but it is all over with her; for, at this present moment, the mother must be dead, and the daughter not far from it. I shall be in for two weeks' lodgings; but may the devil burn me if I give a rag to bury them! I have had losses enough, without counting the

presents which you *beg* me to give to you and your family. This will nicely derange my business. I have luck this year!"

"Bah, bah! you are always complaining, old Micou; you are as rich as Crœsus. When you come to bring me some more provisions, you can give me news of my mother and Calabash!"

"Yes; it must be so."

"Oh! I forget, while you are out, buy me also a new cap, of plaid velvet, with a tassel; mine is no longer fit to be worn."

"Decidedly—you are joking!"

"No, Micou, I want a cap of plaid velvet; it is my notion." "But you are determined, then, to make me sleep on straw?"

"Come, Daddy Micou, don't get vexed; it is yes or no; I do not force you. But enough."

The receiver, reflecting that he was at the mercy of Nicholas, arose, fearing to be assailed with new demands if he prolonged his visit.

"You shall have your cap," said he; "but take care, if you ask me for anything more, I shall give nothing; happen what may, you will lose as much as I."

"Be tranquil, Micou; I shall not blackmail you any more than is necessary, for this would be a pity; you pay such heavy postage as it is."

The receiver went out, shrugging his shoulders with rage, and the warder reconducted Nicholas into the prison. At the moment Micou left, Rigolette entered.

The warder, a man of forty years, an old soldier of energetic appearance, was dressed in a jacket, cap, and trowsers of blue cloth; two silver stars were embroidered on the collar and skirts of his coat.

At sight of the grisette, his face brightened up, and assumed an expression of affectionate benevolence. He had always been struck with the grace, gentility, and touching goodness with which Rigolette consoled Germain when she came to converse with him. Germain, on his part, was no ordinary prisoner. His reserve, his mildness, and sadness, inspired interest in the prison officials; an interest they were careful not to shew him, for fear of exposing him to the bad treatment of his vicious companions, who, as we have shown, regarded him with suspicious hatred.

It rained in torrents, but, thanks to her overshoes and umbrella, Rigolette had courageously braved the wind and rain.

"What a horrible day, my poor girl!" said the guardian to her, kindly. "You must have had a good deal of courage to come out such a time as this at least!"

"When one is thinking, all along the way of the pleasure they are going to give a poor prisoner, one does not pay much attention to the weather, sir."

"I have no need to ask you whom you come to see."

"Surely not. And how is my poor Germain."

"My dear? I have seen many prisoners; they were sad, one or two days, but by degrees they fell in with the rest, and the most sorrowful at first often became the most gay. Germain is not so; he appears to grow sadder every day."

"It is this that troubles me."

"When I am on service in the yards, I watch him out of the corner of my eye; he is always alone. I have already told you, you should advise him not to act thus, but to speak to his comrades, otherwise he will become their butt. The yards are watched, but—a blow is soon struck!"

"Oh! sir! is there still more danger for him?" cried Rigolette.

"Not precisely; but the knaves see he is not one of them, and they hate him because he appears honest and proud."

"Yet I have advised him to do what you have told me, sir: to endeavour to converse with the least wicked; but it is too much for him; he cannot overcome his repugnance."

"He is wrong—wrong; a quarrel is soon got up."

"Can he not be separated from the others?"

"Since I have noticed two or three days ago their evil intentions towards him, I have advised him to take a room by himself."

"Well?"

"I did not think of one thing. A whole range of cells are comprised in the repairs now going on in the prison, and the others are occupied."

"But these bad men are capable of killing him!" cried Rigolette, with her eyes filled with tears. "If by chance he had some persons interested in his fate, what could they do for him, sir?"

"Nothing more than to obtain what the prisoners can obtain themselves by paying money, a separate cell."

"Alas! then he is lost, if they hate him in the prison."

"Don't disturb yourself; he shall be watched closely. But I repeat, my dear, counsel him to be a little familiar with them; only the first step costs!"

"I will reccommend him to do this with all my strength, sir; but for a good and honest heart it is hard to be familiar with such people."

"Of two evils choose the least. I go to ask for Germain. But, stop," said the warder, reflecting; "there are only two visitors left; as soon as they are gone—no more will come to day, for it is now two o'clock—I will send for Germain; you can talk more at ease. I can even when you are alone, let him enter into the passage, so that you will be separated by one grating instead of two; so much less."

"Oh! sir, how kind you are; how much I thank you!"

"Hush! let not any one hear you; it will cause jealousy. Seat yourself up there, at the end of the bench, and as soon as this man and woman are gone I will send for Germain."

The warder returned to his post inside of the

passage, Rigolette went and seated herself sadly at the extremity of the visitors' bench.

Thus we have a fine chance to draw the grisette's portrait.

Rigolette was hardly eighteen, of a middling size, perhaps rather small, but so gracefully shaped, so finely modelled, so voluptuously developed, that her size responded well to her bearing, fearless and yet modest; one inch more in height would have caused her to lose much of her grace; the movement of her small feet, always irreproachably confined in gaiter-boots of black cloth, with rather thick soles, recalled to mind the coquettish, light and discreet run of a quail. She did not appear to walk, she merely touched the pavement; she slid rapidly on its surface. This walk, peculiar to grisettes, ought to be attributed, without doubt, to three causes: To their desire to be thought handsome; to their fear of a admiration expressed in pantomime too expressive; to the desire that they always have to lose as little time as possible in their peregrinations.

Rigolette's two broad thick bands of shining hair, black as jet, fell very low on her forehead; her fine eyebrows seemed traced with ink, and overshadowed large black eyes, sparkling and wicked; her full, plump cheeks were like velvet of the freshest carnation, fresh to the sight, fresh to the touch, like a rosy peach impregnated with the cold dew of the morning.

Her little turned-up nose, saucy and cunning, would have made the fortune of a stage chambermaid; her mouth, somewhat large, with lips of rose well moistened, and little, white, pearly teeth, was smiling and provoking; of three charming dimples, which gave enticing grace to her face, two buried themselves in her cheeks, the other in her chin, not far from a beauty-spot, a little black patch most killingly placed near the corner of her mouth.

Up to the day of Germain's arrest, Rigolette had no sorrows but those of others; she sympathized with all her powers—devoted herself, body and soul, to those who suffered—but thought no more about it when her back was turned. Often she ceased from laughing to weep sincerely, and then she ceased from weeping to laugh again. A true child of Paris—she preferred noise to solitude, movement to repose, the resounding harmony of the orchestra at the Chartreuse or Colisseum balls, to the soft murmur of the winds, the waters, and the foliage—the deafening noise of the streets of Paris to the solitude of the country—the glare of fireworks, the glitter of a ball, the noise of rockets, to the serenity of a fine night, with stars, and darkness, and silence. Alas! yes; the good girl frankly preferred the black mud of the streets of the capital to the verdure of the flowery meadows—its dirty or scorching pavements to fresh and velvet moss of the wood-paths perfumed with violets—the suffocating dust of the barriers or the Boulevards to the waving of golden corn, enamelled with the scarlet flowers of the wild poppy and azure of the blue-bells. Rigolette only left her room on Sundays—and each morning, to lay in her provision of chickweed, bread, milk and hempseed, for herself and her two birds, but she lived in Paris for Paris's sake. She would have been in despair to have lived elsewhere than in the capital.

Another anomaly: notwithstanding this taste for Parisian pleasures; notwithstanding the liberty, or, rather, the state of abandonment in which she found herself, being alone in the world; notwithstanding the rigid economy which she was obliged to use in her smallest expenses in order to live on thirty sous a day; notwithtanding the most mischievous, and adorable little face in the world, never had Rigolette been a man's prey.

Early in life, she had lost her parents by the cholera, and at ten years of age, strangers had taken care of her, until she left them to find her own living. At this period she had made Fleur de Marie's passing acquaintance, and later, as she dwelt in Rudolf's lodging house—that of the prince whom she only thought to be a workman—she had been in the habit of going out on Sundays and other holidays, with young men of her house, but they had given up the companionship when they found how virtuous she was, without knowing it. Germain, also her neighbour in the house, had, however, fallen desperately in love with Rigolette, without daring to breathe one word respecting it. Far from imitating his predecessors, who, resorted to other sources of solace, without losing their regard for her, Germain had delightfully enjoyed his intimacy with the girl, and the pleasure afforded by her society on Sundays and every other evening that he was disengaged. During these long hours, Rigolette was always gay and merry, and Germain affectionate, serious, and attentive, and often slightly melancholy. This sadness was his only disadvantage, for his manners, being naturally refined, did not suffer by comparison with the ridiculous pretensions of M. Giraudeau, a travelling clerk, or with the boisterous eccentricities of Cabrion, an artist, though Giraudeau, by his excessive loquacity, and the painter, by his no less excessive hilarity, had the advantage of Germain, whose gentlemanly gravity rather awed his lively neighbour.

Rigolette had never, evinced any partiality for either of her three lovers; but, with excellent judgment, she soon discovered that Germain combined all the qualities which would render any reasonable woman happy.

When the latter was imprisoned, her feeling manifested itself as love.

CHAPTER IV.

PIQUE-VINAIGRE.

THE prisoner who was placed alongside of Barbillon in the visitor's room, was a man about forty years of age, and of slender make, and with a cunning, intelligent, jovial, and jeering face; he had an

enormous mouth, almost entirely without teeth; when he spoke he twisted it from side to side, according to the pretty general custom of those who address the populace of market places; his nose was flat, his head immensely large, and almost entirely bald; he wore an old gray waistcoat, trowsers of an indescribable colour, pieced in a thousand different places; his naked feet, red from the cold, half wrapped up in old linen, were thrust into wooden shoes.

This man, named Fortune Gobert, nicknamed Pique-Vinaigre (Sharp Vinegar, to prevent mistakes), formerly a juggler, and a prisoner for the crime of passing counterfeit money, was accused of breaking the terms of his ticket-of-leave, and of burglary.

Confined but for a few days, at La Force, already Pique-Vinaigre filled, to the general satisfaction of his prison companions, the post of storyteller. At the present day these are rare, but formerly each ward generally had, at the expense of a light individual contribution, its taleteller, who, by his improvisations, made the interminable winter evenings appear less long, the prisoners retiring to rest at nightfall.

Pique-Vinaigre excelled in that kind of heroic recital where weakness, after a thousand crosses, finishes by triumphing over its persecutors. Pique-Vinaigre possessed, besides, an immense fund of irony, which had given him his nickname. He had just entered the room.

Opposite him, on the other side of the railing, was a woman of about thirty-five, with a pale, sweet, and interesting face, poorly but neatly clad; she wept bitterly, and kept her handkerchief to her eyes.

Pique-Vinaigre looked at her with a mixture of impatience and affection.

"Come, now, Jeanne," said he, "do not be a child; it is sixteen years since we have met; if you keep your handkerchief over your eyes, we won't know each other."

"My brother, my poor Fortune—I suffocate—I cannot speak."

"Ain't you droll! whatever is the matter with you?"

This sister—for this woman was his sister—restrained her sobs, dried her eyes, and regarding him with stupor, answered, "What is the matter? I find you again in prison, who had already been in fifteen years!" "It is true; to-day six months, I came out of Melun Prison, without going to see you at Paris, because the *capital* was forbidden to me."

"Already retaken! What have you, then done? Why did you leave Beaugency, where you were sent, with orders to report yourself now and then."

"Why? You ought to ask me why I went there?" "You are right."

"In the first place, my poor Jeanne, since these gratings are between us both, imagine that I have embraced you, folded you in my arms, as one ought to do when he sees a sister after an age. Now let us chat. A prisoner of Melun, called the Big Cripple, told me that there was at Beaugency an old galley-slave of his acquaintance, who employed liberated convicts in a manufactory of white lead. Do you know what that is?" "No, brother."

"It is a very fine trade; those who are employed in it, at the end of a month or two, have the painter's cholic; of three attacked, about one dies. To be just, the two others die also, but at their ease; they take their time; take good care of themselves, and they may last a year, eighteen months, at the most. After all, the trade is not so badly paid as some others, and there are some folks born already dressed, who hold out two or three years; but these are the old folks, the centenaries of the *white leaders*. They die, it is true, but that's not fatiguing."

"And why did you choose a trade so dangerous, my poor Fortune?"

"And what would you have me do? When I entered Melun for this affair of false money, I was a juggler. As in the prison there was no workshop for my trade, and as I was no stronger than a fly, they put me at making toys for children. It was a manufacturer of Paris who found it advantageous to have made by the prisoners his harlequins, his trumpets of wood, and his swords of ditto! Thus, I tell you, haven't I sharpened, and cut, and carved for fifteen years, these toys! I am sure that I supplied the pets of an entire quarter of Paris—it was, above all, on the trumpet I excelled; and rattles, too! With these two instruments one could have put on edge the teeth of a whole battallion! I pride myself on it. My time out, behold me with the degree of penny-trumpet-manufacturer. They allowed me to choose for my residence three or four places, at forty leagues from Paris: I had for sole resource my knowledge of trumpet-making. Now, admitting that, from old men to babies, all the inhabitants of the town should have had a passion to play toot-too on my trumpets, I should have had, even then, trouble enough to pay my expenses; but I could not seduce a whole village into blowing trumpets from morning to night. They would have taken me for a conspirator!"

"You always laugh."

"That is better than to cry. Finally, seeing that at forty leagues from Paris my trade as a juggler would be of no more resource to me than my trumpets, I demanded an exchange to Beaugency, wishing to engage myself in the whitelead factory. It is a pastry which gives you an indigestion of misery; but, until one dies from it, one has a living; it is always something gained, and I like that trade as well as that of a robber: to steal I am not brave or strong enough, and it was by pure chance I have committed the act of which I shall speak directly."

"You would have been brave and strong if you had only had the *idea* not to steal any more."

"Ah! you believe that, do you?"

"Yes, at the bottom you are not wicked; for, in this dangerous affair of false money, you have been dragged into it in spite of yourself, almost foreed—you know it well."

"Yes, my girl—but, do you see, fifteen years in a prison, that spoils a man like my old pipe which you see, whenever it comes in the jail white as a new pipe; on coming out of Melun, then, I felt myself too cowardly to steal."

"And you had the courage to follow a deadly calling. Hold Fortune! I tell you that you wish to make yourself worse than you are."

"Stop a moment, then: all greenhorn that I was, I had an idea, may the devil burn me if I know why! that I would not care for the cholic, that the malady would find too little in me to feed on, and that it would go elsewhere; in fine, that I would become one of the old white-leaders. On leaving the prison I began by squandering my savings, augmented, understand, by what I had gained by relating stories at night in our ward."

"As you used to tell us in old times, my brother? It used to amuse our mother so much, do you remember?"

"By God! good woman! And she never suspected before she died that I was at Melun?"

"Never: to her last moments she thought you had gone to the islands."

"What could I do, my girl? My escapades were the fault of my father, who brought me up to play the clown, to assist him in his juggling, to eat flax and spit fire; that was the cause that I had not the time to associate with the sons of peers of France, and that I made bad acquaintances. But, to return to Beaugency, once out of Melun, I spent my money as I had a right. After fifteen years in a cage one must have a little air, and amuse one's self so much the more, as, without being too greedy, the white lead might give me a last indigestion; then, what good would my pension money be to me? I ask you. Finally, I arrived at Beaugency almost without a sou: I asked for *Velu*, the friend of Big Cripple, the chief of the factory, Serviteur! no more manufactory of white lead than you could put under your hand; eleven persons had died there in one year; the old galley-slave had shut up shop. Here I was in this village, with my talents for making wooden trumpets for my dinner, and my convict's passport for my sole recommendation. I asked for employment suited to my strength, and, as I had no strength, you can comprehend how I was received; robber here, gueux there, jail bird! in fine, as soon as I make my appearance anywhere, every one clapped their hands on their pockets; I could not, then, prevent myself from starving with hunger in a hole which I was not to leave for five years. Seeing this, I broke my 'parcle' to come to Paris to use my talents. As I had not the means to come in a carriage and four, I came begging all along the road; avoiding the constables as a dog does a kick. I was lucky—I arrived without difficulty at Auteuil. I was worried, I was as hungry as the devil; I was dressed, as you see, without profuseness." And Pique-Vinaigre cast a merry glance at his rags. "I had not a sou; I could at any moment be arrested as a vagabond. Faith, an opportunity offered, the devil tempted me, and, in spite of my cowardice—"

"Enough, my brother, enough," said his sister, fearing that the warder, although at this moment some distance off, might hear the dangerous confession.

"You are afraid that some one will listen." answered he: "be tranquil, I do not conceal it; I was taken in the act; there are no means to deny it; I have confessed all, I know what I have to expect; my account is good."

"Alas!" answered the poor woman, weeping, "with what ease you speak of this."

"If I were to speak of it with uneasiness, what should I gain? Come, be reasonable, Jeanne; must *I* console *you?*" Jeanne wiped away her tears, and sighed.

"But to return to my affair," said Pique-Vinaigre: I arrived near Auteuil in the dusk of the evening. I could go no farther; I did not wish to enter Paris but at night: I seated myself behind a hedge to repose and reflect upon my plans. From the intensity of my thoughts I fell asleep: a noise of voices awoke me; it was quite dark; I listened, it was a man and woman talking on the road, on the other side of my hedge; the man said to the woman, 'Who do you think would rob us? have we not left the house alone a hundred times?' 'Yes,' answered the woman, 'but then we did not leave a hundred francs in our chest.' 'Who knows it fool?" said the husband. 'You are right,' replied the woman, and they passed on. The chance appeared too favourable for me to lose—there was no danger.

"I waited until they had got to a little distance to come out from behind my hedge; I looked around: at twenty steps off I saw a small cottage; that must be the house with the hundred francs; there was no other hovel on the road but this one; Auteuil was five hundred yards off. I said to myself, 'Courage, my old boy, there is no one there; it is night, if there is no dog (you know I always was afraid of dogs), the affair is done.' Luckily there was no dog. To be still more sure, I knocked against the door—nothing; that encouraged me. The shutters of the ground floor were closed: I passed my stick between the two, I forced them, I entered through the window into a chamber; there was some fire in the fireplace; this served as a light; I saw a chest from whence the key had been taken; I took the tongs, I forced the drawers, and under a heap of linen I found the treasure, wrapped up in an old woollen stocking; I did not amuse myself by taking anything else; I jumped out of the window and I fell—guess where? There's luck!"

"Go on!"

"On the back of the watchman who was going to the village."

"What a misfortune!"

"The moon had risen, he saw me coming out of the window; he seized me. He was a giant who could have eaten ten such as me.

Too cowardly to resist, I resigned myself to my fate. I still held the stocking in my hand; he heard the money jingle, he took it all, put it in his bag, and compelled me to follow him to Auteuil. He went to tha mayor's with the usual accompaniment of boys and constables; they waited for the proprietors to return, they make their declaration. I could not deny it; I confessed all, they put on the handcuffs, and off we went!"

"And here you are in prison again, perhaps, for a long time?"

"Listen, Jeanne, I do not wish to deceive you, my girl, so I will tell you at once."

"What more now?"

"Come, take courage!" "But speak then!"

"Well! there is no more prison for me."

"How is that?"

"On account of the burglary in an inhabited house, the lawyer told me, 'It's a safe thing.' I shall have fifteen or twenty years at the galleys and a berth in the pillory to boot."

"The galleys! but you are so weak you will die there!" cried the unhappy woman, bursting unto tears.

"How if I had enrolled myself among the white-leaders?"

"But the galleys, oh! the galleys!"

"It is a prison in the open air, with a red cap instead of a brown one, and besides, I have always been curious to see the ocean. What a starer I am!"

"But the pillory! To be exposed there to the contempt of all the world, oh! my poor brother." And the unfortunate woman began again to weep.

"Come, come, Jeanne, be reasonable. It is a bad quarter of an hour to pass, but I believe one is seated. And, besides, am I not accustomed to a crowd? When I played juggler I always had people around me; I will imagine that I am at my old trade, and if it has too much effect upon me I will close my eyes; it will absolutely be the same as if they did not see me."

Speaking with so much stoicism, this unfortunate man wished less to appear insensible of his criminal actions than to console and satisfy his sister by this apparent indifference. For a man accustomed to prison *manners*, and with whom all shame is necessarily dead—even the galleys were only a change of condition, a "change of caps," as Pique-Vinaigre said, with frightful truth.

Many of the prisoners of the central prisons even prefer the galleys on account of the lively, animated life which is led there, committing often attempts at murder to be sent to Brest or Toulon. This can be imagined: before they enter the galleys they have almost as much work, according to their declaration. The condition of the most honest workman of the forts is not less rude than that of the convicts. They enter the workshop, and leave it, at the same hour, and the beds on which they repose their limbs, exhausted by fatigue, are often no better than those of the galleys.

They are free some one will say.

Yes, free one day, Sunday, and this is also a day of repose for the convict.

But feel they no shame and contempt?

What is shame for these poor wretches, who, each day, bronze the soul in this infamy, in this mutual school of perdition, where the most criminal are the most distinguished? Such are the consequences of the present system of punishment. Incarceration is very much sought after. The galleys—often demanded.

"Twenty years in the galleys!" repeated the poor sister of Pique-Vinaigre.

"But be comforted, Jeanne; they will only pay me in my own coin; I am too feeble to be placed at hard labour. If there is not a mamufactory of trumpets and wooden swords, as at Melun, they will give me easy work, and employ me in the infirmary. I am not refractory; I am good-natured; I will tell stories as I do here, I will make myself adored by the keepers, esteemed by my comrades, and I will send you some cocoa nuts nicely carved, and some straw boxes for my nephews and nieces, in short, as we make our bed, so must we lie on it!"

"If you had only written that you were coming to Paris, I would have tried to conceal and lodge you while you were waiting for work."

"I reckoned to go to your house, but I prepared to come with my hands full; for, besides, from your appearance I see that you do not ride in your carriage. How about your children and husband?"

"Do not speak to me about him."

"Always a rattler, it is a pity, for he is a good workman."

"He does me much harm—I have had troubles enough of my own, without having yours added to them."

"How? your husband—"

"Left me three years ago, after having sold all our furniture, leaving me with the children, without anything, my straw bed excepted."

"You did not tell me this!"

"For what good? it would have grieved you."

"Poor Jeanne! How have you managed, all alone with your three children?"

"Holy Virgin! I had much trouble; I worked by the job as a fringe maker, as well as I could; my neighbours helped me a little, taking care of my children when I went out; and then I, who do not always have luck, had it for once in my life, but it did not profit me, on account of my husband."

"How is that?"

"The lace-maker had spoken of my troubles to one of his customers, informing him how my husband had left me without anything, after having sold all my furniture, and that in spite of it I worked with all my strength to bring up my children; one day, on returning home, what do I find? my room newly furnished, a good bed, linen, and so on; it was the charity of my lace-maker's customer."

"Good customer! Poor sister! Why the devil did you not write me about your poverty? Instead of spending my earnings, I would have sent you some money!"

"I free, to ask from you, a prisoner?"

"Exactly; I was fed, warmed, lodged at the expense of the government; what I earned was so much gained: knowing that my brother-in-law was a good workman, and you a good manager, I was easy, and I fiddled away my money with my eyes shut and my mouth open."

"My husband was a good workman, it is true, but he became dissipated; in fine, thanks to this unexpected succour, I took fresh courage; my eldest daughter began to earn something; we were happy, except for the sorrow of knowing that you were at Melun. Work was plenty, my children were properly dressed, they wanted scarcely anything; that made me take heart! at length, I had even saved thirty-five francs, when, suddenly, my husband returned. I had not seen him for a year; finding me comfortably fixed and well clad, he made no bones about it, he took the money, settled himself at home, got drunk every day, and beat me when I complained."

"The scoundrel!"

"This is not all: he had lodged in a room of our apartments a bad woman with whom he lived; I had to submit to that. For the second time, he began to sell little by little the furniture I had. Foreseeing what would happen, I went to a lawyer who lived in the house, and asked him what I should do to prevent my husband from placing me and my children on straw again."

"It was very plain, you ought to have thrust him out of doors."

"Yes, but I had not the right. The lawyer told me that my husband could dispose of everything, and remain in the house without doing anything; that it was a shame, but that I must submit; that the circumstance of his mistress, who lived under one roof, gave me the right to demand the separation of bed and board, as it is called; so much the more as I had proofs my husband beat me; that I could plead against him, but that it would cost me at least four or five hundred francs to obtain my divorce. You may judge; it is almost all that I could earn in a year! Where could I borrow such a sum? And, besides, it is not only to borrow—but to return. And five hundred francs—all at once—it is a fortune."

"There is, however, a very simple way to amass five hundred francs," said Pique Vinaigre, with bitterness; "it is to hang up one's appetite for a year—to live on air but work just the same. It is astonishing that the lawyer did not give you this advice."

"You are always joking."

"Oh! this time, no!" cried Pique-Vinaigre, with indignation; "for it is infamous that the law should be too dear for poor folks. For look at you, good and worthy mother of a family, working with all your might to bring up your children honestly. Your husband is an arrant scoundrel; he beats you, abuses you, robs you, and spends at the tavern the money you earn; you apply to justice, that it may protect you, and keep from the clutches of this rascal, your bread and your children's. The people of the law tell you: 'Yes, you are right, your husband is a bad fellow, justice shall be done you; but this justice will cost you five hundred francs.' Five hundred francs! that would support you and your family for a whole year! Now, do you see Jeanne? all this proves what the proverb says, that there are only two kinds of people; those who are hung and those who deserve to be."

Rigolette, alone and pensive, having no one else to listen to, had not lost a word of this conversation, and sympathized deeply in the misfortunes of this poor woman. She promised herself to mention this to Rudolf as soon as she should see him, not doubting that he would assist her.

Rigolette, feeling a lively interest in the said fate of the sister of Pique-Vinaigre, did not take her eyes from her, and was endeavouring to approach a little nearer, when, unfortunately, a new visitor entering, asked for a prisoner, and seated himself on the bench between Jeanne and the grisette. She, at the sight of this man, could not restrain a movement of surprise, almost of fear. She recognised one of the two bailiffs who had come to arrest Morel, putting in execution the judgment obtained against the jeweller by Jacques Ferrand.

This circumstance, recalling to Rigolette's mind the untiring persecutor of Germain, redoubled her sadness, from which her attention had been slightly withdrawn by the touching and painful communications of the sister of Pique-Vinaigre. Retreating as far as she could from her new neighbour, the grisette leaned against the wall, and abandoned herself to her sad thoughts.

"Hold, Jeanne," resumed Pique-Vinaigre, whose jovial face had become suddenly clouded, "I am neither strong nor brave; but if I had been there while your husband was causing you so much misery, very playful things would not have passed between us. But you did not act rightly—you—"

"What could I do? I have been obliged to suffer what I could not prevent! As long as there was anything to be sold, my husband sold it, so that he might go to the tavern with his mistress—everything, even to my little girl's Sunday frock."

"But your daily earnings, why did you give them to him? Why did you not hide them?"

"I did hide them; but he beat me so much that I was obliged to give them up. It was not on account of the blows that I yielded, but because I said to myself, in the end he will wound me so seriously that I shall not be able to work for some time; suppose he breaks my arm; then what will become of me—who will take care of, and feed my children? If I am forced to go to the hospital, they will die of hun-

ger then. Thus you can imagine, my brother, I preferred to give my money to my husband, not on account of the beating, but that I might not be wounded, and remain *able to work*."

"Poor woman. Bah! they talk of martyrdom—it is you who are a martyr!"

"And yet I have never harmed any one; I only ask to work to take care of my children; but what would you? there are the happy and unhappy, as there are the good and the wicked."

"Yes, and it is astonishing how happy the good are! But you have finally got rid of that scoundrel of a husband?"

"I hope so, for he did not leave me until he had sold my bedstead, and the cradle of my two little children. But I think he wished to do something worse."

"What do you mean?"

"I say him, but it was rather this bad woman who urged him; it is on that account I speak of it. 'I say,' one day he said to me, 'when in a family there is a pretty girl of fifteen like ours, it is very stupid not to make use of her beauty.'"

"Oh! good! I understand. After having sold the clothes, he wished to sell the body!"

"When he said that, Fortune, my blood boiled; and, to be just, I made him blush with shame at my reproaches; and as this bad woman wished to meddle in our quarrel by asserting that my husband could do with his daughter as he pleased, I treated her so badly, the wretch, that my husband beat me, and since that time I have not seen them."

"Look here, Jeanne, there are folks condemned to ten years' imprisonment, who would not have done like your husband; at least they only despoil strangers."

"At bottom, he is not wicked, look you; it is bad company at the taverns which has ruined him."

"Yes, he would not harm a child; but to a grown person it is different."

"What would you have? One must take life as it comes. At least, my husband gone, I had no longer any fear of being lamed by any blow; I took fresh courage. Not having anything to purchase a mattress with, for before all one must eat and pay rent, and my poor daughter Catherine and myself could hardly earn together forty sous a day, my two other children being too young to work—for want of a mattress we slept upon a straw bed, made with straw that we picked up at the door of a packer in our street.

"And I have squandered my earnings."

"How could you know my trouble, since I did not tell you? Well we doubled our work, Catherine and I. Poor child, if you knew how virtuous, and industrious, and good she is! always with her eyes on mine to know what I wish her to do; never a complaint, and yet—she has already seen so much misery, although only fifteen! Ah, it is a great consolation, Fortune, to have such a child," said Jeanne, wiping her eyes.

"It is just your own picture, I see; you should have this consolation at least."

"I assure you that it is more on her account that I complain than on my own; for, do you see, the last two months she has not stopped working for a moment; once every week she goes out to wash at the boats near the Pont-au-Change, at three sous the hour, the few clothes my husband left us: all the rest of the time at the stake like a poor dog. True, misfortune came to her too soon; I knew well enough that it must come; but at least there are some who have one or two years of tranquillity. That which has also caused me much sorrow in all this, Fortune, is, that I could give you no assistance in anything: yet I will try."

"Do you think I would accept? On the contrary, I'll ask a sou for each pair of ears that listens to my stories; I will ask two, or they will have to do without Pique-Viniagre's romances, and that will help you a little in your housekeeping. But why dont you go into lodgings? Then your husband cant sell anything."

"In lodgings? Why, only reflect, we are four, they would ask us at least twenty sous a day; how much would remain for our living? while our room only costs us fifty francs a year."

"That is true, my girl," said Pique-Vinaigre with bitter irony; "work, break your back to fix up your room a little; as soon as you get something, your husband will rob you again, and some fine day he will sell your daughter as he has sold your clothes."

"Oh! before that he must kill me!—my poor Catherine!"

"He will not kill you, and he will sell your poor Catherine. He is your husband, is he not? He is the head of the family, as your lawyer told you, as long as you are not separated by law, and as you have not five hundred francs to give for that, you must be resigned; your husband has the right to take his daughter from you, and where he pleases. Once he and his mistress have an hankering after this poor little child, they will have her."

"But if this infamy was possible, would there be any justice?"

"Justice!" said Pique-Vinaigre with a burst of sardonic laughter, "is like meat; it is too dear for the poor to eat. Only, understand me, if it is in question to send them to Melun to put them in the pillory, or throw them into the galleys, it is another affair; they give them this justice *gratis*. If they cut their throats, it is again *gratis*—always *gratis*. Ta-a-a-ake your tickets!" added Pique-Vinaigre, imitating a mountebank; "it is not ten sous, two sous, one sou, a centime, that it will cost you. No, ladies and gentlemen, it will cost you the trifle of nothing at all; it suits every one's pockets; you have only to furnish the *head*—the cutting and curling are at the expense of government. Here is justice *gratis*. But the justice which would prevent an honest mother of a family from being beaten and despoiled by a vagabond of a husband, who wishes to make money out of his daughter, this kind of justice costs five hundred francs, you must give it up, my poor Jeanne."

"Fortune," said the unhappy mother, bursting into tears, "you kill me!"

"And does it not kill me to think of your lot, and that of your family, and seeing that I can do nothing? I seem always gay; but do not be deceived; I have two kinds of gaiety, Jeanne; my gaiety gay, and my gaiety sad. I have neither the strength nor the courage to be bad, angry, nor malicious, as others are; that always passes over with me in words more or less farcical. My cowardice and my weakness of body have prevented me from becoming worse than I am. It needed the chance of this lonely hut, where there was neither a cat, nor, above all, a dog, to have urged me to steal. And then, again, it chanced to be a fine moonlight night; for alone, and in the dark, I am as cowardly as the devil!"

"That is what I have always said, my poor Fortune, that you are better than you think. Thus I hope the judges will have pity on you."

"Pity on me? a returned criminal? reckon on it! After that, I don't wish it; to be here, there, or elsewhere, all the same to me; and then, you are right, I am not wicked; and those who are, I hate them, after my fashion, by making fun of them; you must think that, from relating stories where, to please my audience, I make it come out that those who torment others from pure cruelty receive, in the end, their play, I become accustomed to feel as I relate."

"Do these people like stories, my brother? I should not have thought it."

"A moment! If I tell them a story where a fellow who robs, or who kills to rob, is strung up at the end, they will not let me finish; but if it is concerning a woman or child, or, for example, a poor devil like me, who would be thrown to the ground if he was only blown upon, and let him be ill treated by a Bluebeard, who persecutes him solely for the pleasure of persecuting him, for honour, as they say; oh! then they shout with joy when, at the end, the Bluebeard receives his pay. I have, above all, a history called Gringalet and Cut-in-half, which created the greatest sensation at the Centrale de Melun, and which I have not yet related here. I have promised it for to night; but they must subscribe largely to my money-box, and you shall profit by it. Without extra charge, I will write it out for your children. My yarn will amuse them; very religious people would read this story; so be easy."

"In fine, poor Fortune, what consoles me a little is, to see that you are not as unhappy as the others, thanks to your character."

"I am very sure that if I were like a prisoner of our ward, I should be hateful to myself. Poor fellow! I am much afraid that before the end of the day he will bleed; it grows red-hot for him; there is a bad plot formed against him for to-night."

"Oh! they wish to do him harm? you will have nothing to do with it, at least, Fortune?"

"Not such a fool! I might be spattered. As I went backward and forward among them, I heard them muttering. They spoke of a gag, to prevent him from crying out; and then, to hinder any one from seeing the execution, they, mean to make a circle around him, pretending to listen to one of them who should be reading a paper or something else."

"But why do they wish to injure him thus?"

"As he is always alone, and speaks to no one, because he seems disgusted with them, they imagine he is a spy, which is very stupid; for, on the contrary, he would keep company with every one, if he wished to spy. Besides, he has the air of a gentleman, and that eclipses them. It is the *captain* of the ward, called the Living Skeleton, who is at the head of this plot. He is like a real *bloody bones* after this poor Germain; their intended victim is so named. Let them make their own arrangements—it is their business; I can do nothing. But you see, Jeanne, what good comes from being sad in prison; right away you are suspected. I have never been suspected, not I. But my girl—enough talk; go and see if I am at your house; you lose too much precious time by coming here. I can only talk; with you it is different; therefore good night. Come here from time to time; you know I shall be glad to see you."

"My brother, still a few moments, I beg you."

"No, no; your children are expecting you. Ah! you do not tell them, I hope, that their uncle is a boarder here?"

"They think you are at the islands, as my mother did formerly. In this way, I hope, I can talk to them of you."

"Very good. Go! go quickly!"

"Yes, but listen, my poor brother, I have not much, yet I will not leave you thus. You must be cold—no stockings, and this wretched waistcoat! I will fix something for you, with Catherine's aid. Fortune, you know that it is not the will to do something for you that is wanting."

"What? clothes? why I have my trunks full. As soon as they arrive, I shall have where withal to dress myself like a prince. Come, laugh, then, a little! No? Well! seriously, my girl, I do not refuse, while waiting for Gringalet and Cut-in-half to fill my money-box. Then I will return it. Adieu, my good Jeanne! the next time you come, may I love my name of Pique-Vinaigre, if I do not make you laugh. Go away; I have already kept you too long."

"But, brother, listen!"

"My good man! my good man!" cried Pique-Vinaigre to the warder seated at the other end, "I have finished my conversation; I wish to go in; talked enough."

"Oh! Fortune, it is not kind to send me away thus," said Jeanne.

"On the contrary, it is very right. Come, adieu; keep up your courage, and to-morrow morning say to the children that you have dreamed of their uncle, who is in the West Indies, and that he begged you to embrace them. Adieu."

"Adieu, Fortune," said the poor woman, all in tears at seeing her brother enter the prison.

Rigolette, since the bailiff had seated himself alongside of her, had not been able to hear the conversation of Pique-Vinaigre and Jeanne; but she had not taken off her eyes from them, thinking how to find out the address of this poor woman, so as to be able, according to her first idea, to recommend her to Rudolf. When Jeanne rose from bench to leave, the grisette approached her, saying, timidly, "Madame, just now, without wishing to listen to you, I heard that you were a lace-fringe maker?"

"Yes, my friend," answered Jeanne, a little surprised, but prepossessed in favour of Rigolette by her pleasing manners and charming face.

"I am a dress-maker," answered the grisette. "Now that fringes and lace are in fashion, I have sometimes some customers who ask me for trimmings after their own taste; I have thought that perhaps it would be cheaper to apply to the makers; and, besides, I could give you more than your employer does."

"It is true; by buying the silk on my own account I should gain something. You are very kind to think of me. I am quite surprised."

"I will speak to you frankly. I await a person I came to see; having no one to talk with, just now, before this gentleman placed himself between us, without wishing it, I assure you, I have heard you talk to your brother, of your sorrows, of your children; I said to myself poor folks ought to assist each other. The idea struck me at the time that I might be of some use to you, since you are a fringe-maker. If, indeed, what I have proposed suits you, here is my address; give me yours, so that when I shall have a little order to give you I shall know where to find you."

And Rigolette gave one of her cards to the sister of Pique-Vinaigre. She, quite touched at the proceedings, said gratefully,

"Your face has not deceived me; and, besides, do not take it for pride, but you have a resemblance to my eldest daughter, which made me look at you twice on entering. I thank you much, if you employ me, you shall be satisfied with my work; it shall be done conscientiously. I am called Jeanne Duport. I live at No. 1, Street Barillerie."

"No. 1, it is not difficult to remember. Thank you, madam."

"It is for me to thank you, my dear, it so kind in you to have thought at once of serving me! Once more I express my surprise."

"Why that is very plain, Madam Duport," said Rigolette, with a charming smile. "Since I look like your daughter Catherine, that which you call my kindness ought not to surprise you."

"How kind! Thanks to you, I go away from here less sad than I thought; and then, perhaps, we may meet here again, for you come, like me, to see a prisoner."

"Yes, madam," answered Rigolette, sighing.

"Then, adieu. I shall see you again; at least I hope so, Miss Rigolette," said Jeanne Duport, after having cast her eyes on the address of the grisette.

"At least," thought Rigolette, resuming her seat, "I know now the addres of this poor woman; and certainly M. Rudolf, will interest himself for her when he knows how unfortunate she is, for he has always told me, "If you know any one much to be pitied, address yourself to me."

And Rigolette, taking her place, awaited with impatience the end of the conversation of her neighbour, in order to be able to ask for Germain.

Now a few words on the preceding scene.

Unfortunately, it must be confessed, the indignation of the brother of Jeanne Duport was legitimate. Yes; in saying the law was *too dear* for the poor, he said the truth.

To plead before the civil tribunals is to incur enormous expenses, quite out of the reach of artisans, who barely exist on their scanty wages.

Let a mother or father of a family belonging to this ever-sacrificed class wish to obtain an obliteration of the conjugal tie; let them have all right to obtain it; will they obtain it?

No; for there is no workman in a condition to spend four or five hundred francs for the onerous formalities of such a judgment.

Yet the poor have no other life than a domestic one; the good or bad conduct of the head of an artisan's family is not only a question of morality; but of *bread*. The fate of a woman of the people, such as we have endeavoured to paint, does it deserve less interest, less protection than that of a rich woman, who suffers from the bad conduct or infidelities of her husband; think you?

Nothing is more worthy of pity, doubtless, than the griefs of the heart. But when to these griefs is added, for an unfortunate mother, the misery of her children, is it not monstrous that the poverty of this woman places her without the law, and leaves her and her family without defence against the odious treatment of a drunken and worthless husband?

Yet this monstrosity exists.*

And a liberated criminal can, in this circumstance as in others, deny, with right and reason the impartiality of the institutions in the name of which he is condemned.

Is it necessary to say what there is in this dangerous to society, to justify such attacks?

What will be the influence, the moral authority of those laws whose application is absolutely subordinate to a question of money?

Ought not civil justice, like criminal justice, to be accessible to all?

When people are too poor to be able to invoke the benefits of a law eminently preservative and tutelary, ought not society to assure the application, through respect for the honour and repose of families?

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* *Translator's Note.*—How singular that, as this new edition of the *sensational romancist's* work is issued the Imperial Parliament should have a bill to redress this very oversight before it.

But let us leave this woman, who will remain all her life the victim of a brutal and perverted husband, because she is too poor to obtain a matrimonial separation by law.

Let us speak of Jeanne Duport's brother. This man left a den of corruption to enter the world again; he has paid the penalty of his crime by expiation. What precautions has society taken to prevent his falling back into crime?

None.

Has any one, with charitable foresight, rendered possible his return to well doing, in order to be able to punish, as one should punish, in a becoming manner, if he shows himself incorrigible?

No.

The contagious influence of your jails is so well known, and so justly dreaded, that he who comes out from them is everywhere an object of scorn, aversion, and alarm. Where he twenty times an honest man, he would scarcely find occupation anywhere.

And what is more: the penalty of a ticket-of-leave banishes him to small localities, where his past life must be well known; and here he will have no means of exercising the exceptionable employment often imposed on the prisoners by the contractors of the maison centrales. If the liberated convict has the courage to resist temptation, he abandons himself to some of those murderous occupations of which we have spoken, to the preparation of certain chemical productions, by which one in ten perish; or, if he has the strength, he goes to get out stone in the forest of Fontainbleau, an employment which he survives, average time, six years!

The condition of a liberated convict is, then, much worse, more painful, more difficult, than it was before his first criminal action: he lives surrounded by shackles and dangers; he is obliged to brave repulses and disdain—often the deepest misery.

And if he succumbs to all these frightful temptations to criminality, and commits a second crime, you show yourselves ten times more severe towards him than for his first fault.

That is unjust; for it is almost always the necessity you impose on him which conducts him to a second crime. Yes; for it is shown that, instead of correcting him, your penitentiary system depraves. Instead of ameliorating, it makes worse. Instead of curing slight moral affections, it renders them incurable. Your aggravation of punishment, applied without pity to the backslider, is, then, iniquitous, barbarous, since this backsliding, is, thus to express it, a forced consequence of your penal institutions.

The terrible punishment which awaits this *double guilt* would be just and excusable if your prisons improved the morals, purified the prisoners, and if, at the expiration of the sentence, good conduct was, if not easy, at least generally possible.

If any one is surprised at these contradictions of the law, what would he be when he compares certain penalties to certain crimes?

Either on account of their inevitable consequences, or on account of the disproportion which exists in their punishment. The conversation of the prisoner whom the bailiff came to see will offer to us one of these afflicting contrasts.

CHAPTER V.

BOULARD.

THE prisoner who entered at the moment that Pique-Vinaigre left it, was a man of about thirty years of age, with red hair, and a jovial, fat, and rubicund face; his middling stature rendered still more remarkable by his enormous corpulency. This prisoner, so rosy and stout, was wrapped up in a long, warm coat of gray swan's-down, with gaiter trousers of the same material. A kind of hooded cap of red velvet, completed the costume of this personage, who wore excellent furred slippers. Although the fashion of wearing trinkets was over, the golden watch chain sustained a goodly number of fine gold seals and rings. Finally, several rings, enriched with precious stones, sparkled on the fat red fingers of this prisoner, known as Boulard the Bailiff, accused of breach of trust.

His visitor was, Pierre Bourdin, one of the officers charged with the arrest of Morel the jeweller.

Bourdin was rather shorter, but quite as fat, and attired after his patron, whose magnificence he admired? Having, like him a partiality of jewels, he wore on this day a huge topaz pin, and a long gold chain suspended from his neck, was entwined among the buttonholes of his waistcoast.

"Good-day! faithful Bourdin; I was quite sure you would not be missing at the roll call," said Boulard, joyously, in a faint cracked voice, which singularly contrasted with his fat body and blooming face.

"Missing at the roll call!" answered the bailiff; "I am incapable of such an act, general!" It was thus that Bourdin, with a pleasantry at once familiar and respectful, called the bailiff, under whose orders he acted; this military form of speech being often used among certain classes of civil practitioners.

"I see with pleasure that friendship remains faithful to the unfortunate," said Boulard, with cordial gaiety; "yet I began to be uneasy. Three days since I wrote to you, and no Bourdin, till now."

"Imagine, general, quite a history. You recollect well the handsome viscount in the Rue de Chaillot?" "Saint Remy."

"Exactly! you know how he laughed at our writs?" "It was quite indecent."

"To be sure it was. Malicorne and I were quite stupified at it, if that were possible."

"It is impossible, brave Bourdin."

"Happily, general; but here is the fact: this handsome viscount has got new titles."

"Has he become a count."

"No! from a cheat he has become a robber."

"Ah! ah!"

"They are at his heels for some diamonds he has stolen; and, by way of parenthesis, they belong to that jeweller who employed this sneak of a Morel, the lapidary whom we went to nab in the Rue du Temple, when a tall slim jockey, with black mustaches, paid for the starved rat, and came near pitching, headforemost down the stairs, Malicorne and me."

"Oh! yes, yes; I recollect. You told me that, my poor Bourdin; it was very funny. The best of the farce was that the portress of the house emptied on your backs a saucepan of boiling soup."

"Saucepan included, general, which burst like a bomb at our feet. The old sorceress!'

"That will be taken into your charge. But this handsome viscount?"

"I tell you, then, that Saint Remy was prosecuted for a robbery, after having made his ninny of a father believe that he had blown his brains out. An agent of the police, one of my friends, knowing that I had for a long time tracked this lord, asked me if I could not put him on the scent. I learnt too late, at the time of our last writ, which he had escaped, that he was burrowed in a farm at Arnouville, at five leagues from Paris. But when we arrived there it was too late; the bird had flown!

"Besides, he had the following day paid this bill of exchange; thanks to a certain great lady, they say. Yes, general; but, no matter; I know the rest. He had once been concealed there; he might well enough be concealed there a second time. That is what I said to my friend in the police. He proposed for me to lend a hand, as an amateur, and conduct him to the farm. I had nothing to do—it was a nice party to the country—I accepted."

"Well! the viscount?"

"Not to be found. After having at first wandered around the farm, and having afterward introduced ourselves there, we returned as wise as we went; and this is the reason I have not been able to render myself sooner to your orders, general."

"I was very sure there was an impossibility on your part, my good fellow."

"But, if it is not improper, tell me, how the devil did you get here?"

"Vulgar people, my dear—a herd of riff-raff, who, for the miserable sum of sixty thousand francs, of which they pretend I have despoiled them, have carried a complaint against me for an abuse of confidence, and forced me to give up my commission."

"Really! general? ah well! this is a misfortune! how—shall we work no more for you?"

"I am on half pay, my good Bourdin; here I am on an allowance."

"But who is, then, so savage?"

"Just imagine that one of the most severe against me is a liberated robber, who gave me to collect a bill of seven hundred miserable francs, for which it was necessary to prosecute. I did prosecute; I was paid, and I pocketed the money; and because, in consequence of speculations which did not succeed, I have spent this money, as well as that of many others, all the rubbishing lot have made such a brawling, that a writ was issued to arrest me, and thus you see me here, my good fellow; neither more nor less than a malefactor."

"Take care that don't hurt you, general."

"Yes; but what is most curious is, this convict has written to me, some days since, that this money being his sole resource for rainy days, and that these days had now arrived (I do not know what he means by that), I was responsible for the crimes he might commit to escape starvation."

"It is charming, on my word!"

"Is it not? nothing more convenient. The droll fellow is capable of giving that as an excuse. Happily, the law knows no such accomplices."

"After all, you are only accused of an abuse of confidence, is it not, my general?"

"Certainly! do you take me for a thief, Master Bourdin?"

"Oh! general. I meant to say there was nothing serious in all this; after all, there is not enough to whip a cat."

"Have I a despairing look, my good fellow?"

"Not at all; I never saw you look more cheerful. Indeed, if you are condemned, you will only have two or three months imprisonment, and twenty-five francs fine. I know my code."

"And these two or three months, I shall be allowed, I am sure, to pass at my ease in a lunatic asylum. I have one deputy under my thumb."

"Oh! then your affair is sure."

"Hold, Bourdin, I can hardly keep from laughing; these fools who have sent me here will gain much by it! They shall never see a sou of the money they claim. They force me to sell my commission—all the same. I am aware of the duty I owe my predecessor. You see it is these muffs who will be the geese of the farce, as Robert Macaire says."

"That produces the same effect on me, general; so much the worse for them."

"My good fellow, let us come to the subject which made me beg you to come here; it is touching a delicate mission, concerning a female," said Boulard, with a mysterious air.

"Ah! rogue of a general, I recognise you there! What is it? count on me."

"I interest myself particularly in a young actress of the Folies-Dramatiques; I pay her board, and, in exchange, she pays me in return, at least I think so; for, my good fellow, you know, the absent are often in the wrong. Now, I am the more tenacious to know if I am wrong, as Alexandrine—she is called Alexandrine—has sent for some money. I have never been stingy with the fair sex; but, I do not wish to be made a fool of. Thus, before playing the generous with this dear friend, I wish

to know if she deserves it by her fidelity. I know there is nothing more absurd, than fidelity; but it is a weakness I have. You will render me, then, a friendly service, my dear comrade, if you can for a few days have a supervision over my love, and let me know how to act, either by talking with the landlady of Alexandrine, or—"

"Sufficient, general," interrupting. "This is nothing worse than watching, spying, and following a creditor. Have confidence in me; I shall find out if Lady Alexandrine sticks a penknife in the contract, which appears to me quite improbable; for, without flattery, general, you are too handsome a man, and too generous not to be valued."

"I ought to be a handsome man; yet I am absent, my dear comrade, and it is a great wrong; in fine, I count on you to know the truth."

"You shall know it, I will answer for it."

"Ah! my dear comrade, how can I express my gratitude?"

"Come, come, now, general."

"It is understood, my good Bourdin, that in this affair, your fees shall be the same as for an arrest."

"General, I will not allow it; so long as I acted under your orders, have you not always allowed me to grind the debtors to the quick, treble the fees of arrest, costs which you have afterward prosecuted to payment with as much activity as if they had been due to yourself?"

"But, my dear comrade, that is different; in my turn I will not allow—"

"General, you will humiliate me, if you do not allow me to offer you this as a feeble proof of my gratitude."

"Very well; I shall struggle no longer with your generosity. Besides, your devotion will be a sweet recompense for the freedom that I have always maintained in our business affairs."

"That is what I expect, my general; but can I not serve you in any other way? you must be horribly situated here, you, who like to be so much at your ease! You are in a cell by yourself, I hope?"

"Certainly, and I arrived just in time, for I have the last vacant room. I have arranged myself as well as I can in my cell; I am not very badly off; I have a stove; I sent for a good arm-chair; I make three long repasts; I digest, I walk and sleep. Saving the inquietude which Alexandrine causes me, you see I am not much to be pitied."

"But you are so much of a *gourmand*, general! the resources of the prison are so meagre?"

"But the provision merchant who lives in this street, has been created, as it were, for my service? I have an open account with him, and every day he sends me a nice little basket; and while on this subject, and you are ready to do me a favour, beg good Mrs. Michonneau, who, by the way, is not so bad—"

"Ah! rogue—rogue of a general!"

"Come, my dear comrade, no evil thoughts," said the baliff, "I am only a good customer and neighbour. Pray dear Mrs. Michonneau to put into my basket to-morrow some pickled tunny fish; it is now in season; it will be good for my digestion, and make me thirsty."

"Excellent idea!"

"And then, let her send a hamper of Burgundy, Champague, and Bordeaux, just like the last—she knows what that means; and let her add two bottles of her old 1817 Cognac, and a pound of pure Mocha, fresh ground and burned."

"I will just note down the date of the brandy so as not to forget it," said Bourdin, taking his notebook from his pocket.

"Since you are writing, my dear comrade, have the goodness to note down to ask at my house for my eider down coverlet."

"All this shall be executed to the letter, general. Be easy; I feel now a little more assured as to your good living. But do you take your walks pell-mell among the low prisoners?"

"Yes, and it is very gay, very animated; I come out of my room after breakfast? I go sometimes into one court, sometimes into another; and, as you say, I mix with the dregs. I assure you that, at the bottom, they appear to be very good fellows; some of them are very amusing. The most abandoned assemble in what they call the Lion's Den. Ah! my dear comrade, what hangdog faces! There is one among them named Skeleton! I have never seen his fellow."

"What a singular name!"

"He is so thin, or, rather, so fleshless, that it is no nickname; I tell you, he is frightful; and with all this, he is provost marshall of his ward; he is by far the greatest villain of them all. He comes from the galleys, and he has again robbed and murdered; but his last murder is so horrible, that he knows very well he will be condemned to death to a certainty, but he laughs at it like fun."

"What a ruffian!"

"All the prisoners admire, and tremble before him. I put myself at once in his good graces, by giving him some cigars; he has taken me into his friendship, and teaches me slang. I make progress.

"Oh! oh! what a good lark! my general learning flash!"

"I tell you I amuse myself like anything. These jockeys adore me; some of them are even familiar as relations. I am not proud, like a little gentleman, Germain, a barefoot, who has not the means to be separate, and yet pretends to play the disdainful, with them."

"But he must have been delighted to find a man so much at home as you are, to talk with, if he is so highly disgusted with the others?"

"Bah! he did not seem to remark who I was; but had he remarked it, I should have been very guarded to respond to his advances. He is the butt of the prison. They will play him, sooner or later, a bad turn, and I have not, of course, any desire to partake of the aversion of which he is the object."

"You are very right."

"That would spoil my recreation; for my promenade with the prisoners is a real promenade. Only these robbers have not a great opinion of me, mentally. You comprehend—my accusation of a simple abuse of confidence—it is a sad thing for such fellows. Thus they look upon me as no great shakes, as Arnal says."

"In fact, alongside of these matadores of crime, you are—"

"A lamb, my dear comrade. Since you are so obliging, do not forget my commissions."

"Do not be uneasy, my general."

"1st. Alexandrine;

"2d. The fish, and the hamper of wine;

"3d. The old 1817 Cognac, the ground coffee, and the eider down coverlet."

"You shall have all. Anything more?"

"Yes, I forgot. Do you know where M. Badinot lives?"

"The broker? yes."

"Will you tell him that I reckon on his obliging disposition to find me a lawyer who is prepared for my cause—that I shall not regard a cool thousand?"

"I will see M. Badinot, be assured, general; this evening all your commissions shall be executed, and to-morrow you will receive what you have demanded. Adieu, and good heart, general."

"Ta, ta!"

And the prisoner left on one side, and the visitor on the other.

Now compare the crime of Pique Vinaigre, a robber, to the offence of Boulard, the bailiff.

Compare the point of departure from virtue of the two, and the reasons, necessities, which have pushed them on to crime.

Compare, finally, the punishment that awaits them.

Coming out of prison, inspiring everywhere fear and indifference, the liberated convict could not follow, in the residence appointed him, the trade he knew; he hoped to be able to work at an occupation dangerous to his life, but suitable for his strength; this resource failed him.

Then he breaks his terms of release, returns to Paris, contriving to conceal his former life and find some work.

He arrives, exhausted with fatigue, dying with hunger; by chance he discovers that a sum of money is deposited in a neighbouring house; he yields to temptation, he forces a window, opens a desk, steals one hundred francs, and flies. He is arrested, is a prisoner. He will be tried, condemned. For a second crime, fifteen or twenty years of hard labour and the pillory is what awaits him. He knows it. This formidable punishment he deserves.

Property is sacred. He who, at night, breaks open your doors to take your goods ought to undergo a severe penalty. In vain shall the culpable plead the want of work, poverty, his position so difficult and intolerable, the wants which this position, this condition of a liberated convict imposes on him. So much the worse; there is but one law. Society, for its peace and safety, will and ought to be armed with boundless power, and without pity repress these audacious attacks upon others.

Yes, this wretch, ignorant and stupid, this corruted and despised convict, has merited his fate.

But what shall he then deserve who, intelligent, rich, educated, surrounded by the esteem of all, clothed with an official character, will steal—not to eat, but to satisfy some fanciful caprice, or to try the chance of stock-jobbing? Will steal, not a hundred francs, but a hundred thousand francs—a million? Will steal, not at night, at the peril of his life, but tranquilly, quite at his ease, in the sight of all? Will steal, not from an unknown who has placed his money under the safeguard of a lock, but from a client, who has placed from necessity his money under the safeguard of the public officer, whom the law points out—imposes on his confidence?

What terrible punishment will he deserve, then, who, instead of stealing a small sum almost from necessity, will steal wholesale a considerable amount? Would it not be a crying injustice not to apply to him a similar punishment to that bestowed on the poor villain pushed to extremities by misery, to theft by want?

Get along! says the law.

How! apply to a man well brought up the same punishment as to a vagabond? For shame! To compare an offence of good society with a vulgar burglary? Fie!

Thus, for the public defaulting officer: Two months' imprisonment.

For the liberated prisoner:—twenty years hard labour, and the pillory.

What can be added to these facts? They speak for themselves.

What sad and serious reflections they give birth to.

Faithful to his promise, the old warder had called for Germain.

When Boulard re-entered the prison, the door opened, Germain entered, and Rigolette was no longer separated from her poor lover but by a slight wire railing.

CHAPTER VI.

FRANCOIS GERMAIN.

GERMAIN'S features were wanting in regularity, but a more interesting face could scarcely be seen; his bearing was exalted; his figure graceful; his dress plain, but neat (gray trousers and a black frock-coat closely buttoned) showed none of that slovenly carelessness so peculiar to prisoners; his white hands bore witness of a care for his person which had still more increased the aversion of the other prisoners; for moral perversity is almost always joined to personal filthiness.

His brown hair, naturally curled, which he wore long and parted on the side, according to the fashion of the times, hung around his pale

and dejected face; his eyes, of a beautiful blue, announced frankness and kindness; his smiles, at once sad and sweet, expressed benevolence and habitual melancholy; for, although very young, this unfortunate youth had experienced many trials.

In a word, nothing could be more touching than his appearance, suffering, affecting resigned; as also nothing more honest, more loyal, than the heart of this young man.

The cause even of his arrest (despoiling it of the calumnious aggravations due to the hatred of Jacques Ferrand) proved the kindheartedness of Germain, and accused him only of a moment's thoughtlessness or imprudence, culpable, doubtless, but pardonable, when one reflects that he was able to replace in the desk of the notary the sum taken to save Morel the lapidary. Germain blushed slightly when, through the grating, he perceived the fresh and charming face of Rigolette.

She, according to her custom, wished to appear gay, to encourage and cheer his spirits; but she ill concealed the sorrow and emotion that she had always felt since he had been imprisoned. Seated on a bench on the other side of the railing, she held on her lap her basket.

The old warder, instead of remaining in the passage, went and seated himself near a stove at the extremity of the room. In a few moments he fell asleep.

Germain and Rigolette could talk at their ease.

"Come, M. Germain," said the grisette, approaching her face as close as she could to the grating the better to examine the features of her friend; "let me see if I am satisfied with your face. Is it less sorrowful? Hum! hum! so, so; take care; you will make me angry."

"How kind you are to come again to-day!"

"Again! what! that is a reproach."

"Ought I not, in truth, reproach you for doing so much for me—for me, who can do nothing but thank you?"

"An error, sir; for I am also as happy from my visits as you are. So I must, in my turn thank you. Ah! ah! there is were I have caught you, Master Unjust. I have half a mind to punish you for your wicked ideas, by not giving you what I have brought."

"Another kindness! how you spoil me! oh! thank you. Pardon me, if I repeat so often this word, which you dislike! but you leave me nothing else to say."

"In the first place, you do not know what I have brought."

"What is that to me?"

"Well, you are polite?"

"Whatever it may be, does it not come from you? Your touching kindness, does it not fill me with gratitude, and—"

Germain could not finish, but cast down his eyes.

"And of what?" asked Rigolette, blushing.

"And of—and of devotion," stammered Germain.

"Why not add respect at once, like at the end of a letter," said Rigolette, impatiently, "You deceive me; it was not that which you intended to say. You stopped short."

"I assure you—"

"You assure me! you assure me! I see you blush through the gating. Am I not your little friend, your neighbour? Why do you conceal anything? Be frank, then, with me; tell me all," added the grisette, timidly; for she only waited for an avowal from Germain to tell him openly that she loved him. An honest and generous love, which the misfortunes of Germain had called into existence.

"I assure you," answered the prisoner, with a sigh, "that I conceal nothing from you!"

"Fie, the false man!" cried Rigolette, stamping her foot. "Well, you see this large cravat of white wool that I brought for you?" and she took it from her basket. "To punish you for your dissimulation, you shall not have it. I knit it for you. I said to myself, it must be so cold, so damp, in those large prison yards, that at least he will be protected nicely with this; he is so chilly."

"How, you?"

"Yes, you are liable to cold," said Rigolette, interrupting him. "Perhaps I recollect it well! that did not, however, prevent you hindering me (out of delicacy) from putting any more wood in my stove when you passed the evening with me. Oh, I have a good memory."

"And I also—only too good!" said Germain, in an agitated voice, passing his hand over his eyes.

"Come, now, there you are becoming sad again, although I forbid it."

"How, do you wish me not to be touched, even to tears, when I think of all that you have done for me since my detention here? And this new attention, is it not charming? Do I not know that you encroach upon your nights to make time to come and see me? On my account you impose upon yourself extra labour."

"That is it! Pity me, then, quickly, because every two or three days I take a fine walk to come and visit my friends, I, who adore a walk. It is so amusing to look at the shops along the streets!"

"And to come out on such a day; such a wind!"

"A reason the more; you have no idea what funny figures you meet! Some holding on their hats with both hands, so that the wind shall not carry them off; others, with their umbrellas turned wrong side out, like a tulip, are making incredible grimaces, shutting their eyes, while the rain beats in their faces. Ah, this morning, during my whole walk, it was a real comedy! I promised myself to make you laugh by telling it to you. But you will not even force a smile."

"It is not my fault; pardon me, but the kind interest you have manifested for me touches my very heart. You know it; my emotions are never gay; they are stronger than—"

Rigolette, not wishing to let him observe that, notwithstanding her prattle, she was very near

partaking his agitation, hastened to change the conversation, and replied,

"You say that your feelings are stronger than you; but there is another thing that you will not master, although I have begged and supplicated you," added Rigolette. "Of what do you speak?"

"Of your obstinacy in always keeping yourself apart from the other prisoners; in never speaking to them. The warder has just told me again that, for your own interest, you should associate with them. I am sure you will not do it. You are silent. You see well it is always the same thing! You will not be contented until these frightful men have done you some harm!"

"You do not know the horror with which they inspire me. You do not know all the personal reasons that I have to fly and execrate them and their fellows!"

"Alas! yes; I think I know them—these reasons. I have read the papers which you wrote for me, and which I went to your lodgings to get after your imprisonment. There I have learned the dangers you have incurred since your arrival in Paris, because you would not associate yourself in crime with the scoundrel who brought you up. It was on account of the trap set for you that you left the Rue de Temple, only telling *me* where you were going to reside. In those papers I have also read something else," added Rigolette, blushing anew, and casting down her eyes; "I have read some things—that—"

"Oh! that you should have been always ignorant of, I swear it," cried Germain, quickly, "but for the misfortune which has fallen upon me—Ah! I interest you; be generous; pardon me these follies; forget them. In happier times I allowed myself these dreams, as wild as they were."

Rigolette had a second time endeavoured to extract an avowal from the lips of Germain, by making allusion to passages filled with tenderness and passion, which he had formerly written and dedicated to the recollections of the grisette; for, as we have said, he had always felt for her a lively and sincere affection; but to enjoy the cordial intimacy of his sweet neighbour, he had concealed this love under the mask of friendship.

Rendered by misfortune still more suspicious and timid, he could not imagine that Rigolette loved him *with love*: he a prisoner, he withering under a terrible accusation, while before these misfortunes she had never evinced any attachment stronger than that of a sister.

The grisette, seeing herself so little understood, suppressed a sigh, waiting, hoping for a better occasion to unfold to Germain the wishes of her heart. She answered, then, with embarrassment: "I can easily comprehend that the society of these bad people causes you horror, but that is no reason for you to brave useless dangers."

"I assure you that in order to follow your advice, I have several times tried to address some of them who seemed the least criminal; but if you knew what language! what men!"

"Alas! it is true, it must be terrible."

"What is still more terrible is, to find I become more and more accustomed, habituated to the frightful conversations which, in spite of myself, I hear all the day; yes, now I listen with a sad apathy to the horrors which, during my first days here, aroused my indignation; thus, I begin to doubt myself," cried he, with bitterness.

"Oh! M. Germain, what do you say?"

"By constantly living in these horrid places, our minds become accustomed to criminal thoughts, as our hearing becomes habituated to the gross words which resound continually around us. I comprehend now that one can enter here innocent, although accused, and leave it perverted."

"Yes, but not you—not you?"

"Yes, I, and others a thousand times better than I. Alas! those who, before conviction, condemn us to this odious association, are ignorant of its mournful and fatal effects. They are ignorant that almost in all cases the air which is breathed here becomes contagious—fatal to honour!"

"I pray you, do not talk thus; you cause me too much sorrow." "You ask me the cause of my growing sadness, there you have it. I did not wish to tell you; but I have only one way of acknowledging your pity for me."

"My pity—my pity?"

"Yes, it is to conceal nothing from you. Ah well! I acknowledge it with affright. I no longer recognise myself. I have good reason to despise, to fly these wretches. Their presence, their contact affects me, in spite of myself. One would say that they have the fatal power to vitiate the atmosphere they breathe. It seems to me that I feel the corruption entering through every pore. If they absolve me from the fault I have committed, the sight, the acquaintance of honest men will fill me with confusion and shame. I have not yet had the enjoyment of pleasant companions; but I dread the day when I shall find myself among honourable people, because I have the consciousness of my weakness."

"Of your weakness?"

"Of my cowardice!"

"Of your cowardice? but what unjust ideas you have of yourself!"

"Ah! is it not to be cowardly and culpable to compound with one's duty and probity? And that I have done."

"You! you!"

"I! On entering here I did not extenuate the magnitude of my fault, all excusable as it was, perhaps. Well! now it appears to me less, from hearing these robbers and these murderers speak of their crimes with obscene jests or ferocious pride. I surprise myself sometimes envying them their audacious indifference, and upbraiding myself bitterly for the remorse with which I am tormented for so slight an offence, compared to their misdeeds."

"But you are right! your deed, far from being blameable, is generous; you were sure of being able to return the money which you took only for a few hours, in order to save a whole family from ruin, from death, perhaps."

"No matter; in the eyes of the law, in the eyes of honest men, it is a robbery. Doubtless it is less criminal to steal for such a purpose, than for any other; but it is a fatal symptom, to be obliged, in order to excuse one's self in one's eyes, to look around for a reason. I am no longer the equal of men without a stain. Behold me already forced to compare myself with the degraded men with whom I live. Thus, in time, I well see, conscience is blunted, and becomes hardened. To-morrow, I shall commit a robbery, not with the certainty of being able to restore what I took for a laudable object, but I shall steal from cupidity, and I shall doubtless think myself innocent in comparison with those who murder to rob. And yet, at this present moment, there is as great a distance between me and an assassin, as there is between me and an irreproachable man. Thus, because there are beings a thousand times more degraded than I am, my degradation is to be excused in my eyes! Instead of being able to say as formerly, I am as honest as the most honest men, I will console myself by saying I am the least degraded of the wretches among whom I am condemned now to live!"

"Not always? Once out of this?"

"No matter; even if acquitted, these people know me; when they leave the prison, if they meet me, they will speak to me as their old jail companion. If any one is ignorant of the accusation which brought me to the assizes, these wretches will threaten to divulge it. Thus you well see, cursed and now indissoluble links unite me to them, while, shut alone in my cell until the day of my trial, unknown by them as they would have been unknown to me, I should not have been assailed by these fears, which may paralyze the best resolutions. And then, alone, in thinking of my fault, it would have been magnified instead of being diminished; the graver it appeared to me, the greater would have been my future expiation. Thus, the more I should have felt the need of my own pardon, the more in my poor sphere I should have tried to do good. For it needs a hundred good actions to atone for a single bad one. But shall I ever dream of expiating that which at this moment, scarcely causes me any remorse? Hold! I feel it, I obey an irresistible influence, against which I have struggled for a long time with all my strength. I was educated for crime, I yield to my destiny; after all, isolated, without family, what matters it that my destiny should be accomplished, be it honest or criminal? And yet, my intentions were good and pure. When they wished to make me guilty, I experienced a profound satisfaction in saying to myself, I have never been wanting in honour, and that, perhaps, was more difficult for me than all the rest. And now—oh! it is frightful—frightful," cried the prisoner, sobbing in so heart-rending a manner that Rigolette, deeply affected, could not restrain her tears.

Let us say, however, that Germain, thanks to his sterling probity, had struggled for a long time victoriously, and that he felt the approaches of the malady more than he experienced reality.

His fear of seeing his fault become of less gravity in his own eyes, proved that he still felt all its enormity; but the trouble, apprehension, and doubts which cruelly agitated his virtuous and generous mind, were not the less alarming symptoms.

Guided by the rectitude of her understanding, by her woman's sagacity, and by the impulses of her love, Rigolette divined that which we have just said. Although well convinced that her friend had not yet lost any of his probity, she feared that, notwithstanding the excellence of his nature, Germain might at some future period become indifferent to that which then tormented him so cruelly.

Rigolette, wiping her eyes, and addressing Germain, who was leaning against the grating, said to him with a touching, serious, almost solemn accent, and in a manner he had never seen her assume, "Listen to me, Germain; I shall express myself perhaps badly; I do not speak so well as you; but what I shall tell you will be as truly sincere. In the first place, you were wrong to complain of being isolated, abandoned."

"Oh! do not think that I ever forget that which your pity for me inspires you to do!"

"Just now, I did not interrupt you when you spoke of *pity*; but since you repeat this word, I must say that it is not pity at all which I feel for you. I am going to explain this as well as I can. When we were neighbours, I loved you as a brother, as a good companion; you rendered me some little services, I rendered you others; you made me partake of your Sunday amusements, I tried to be very lively, very agreeable, in order to thank you: we were quits."

"Quits? oh! no—I—"

"Let me speak in my turn. When you were forced to leave the house where we dwelt, your departure caused me more regret than that of my other neighbours."

"Can it be true?"

"Yes, because they were men without care, whom certainly I ought to miss less than you; and, besides, they did not yield themselves to be my acquaintances until I had told them a hundred times that they could be nothing else; while you—you have at once imagined what we ought to be to each other. Notwithstanding this, you have passed with me all the time you had to spare; you taught me to write; you gave me good advice, a little serious, because it was good; in fine, you have been the most attentive of my neighbours, and the only one who asked nothing of me for the trouble. This is not all; on leaving the house you gave me a great proof of confidence. To see you confide a secret so important to a little girl like me, bless me! that made me proud. Thus, when I was separated

from you my thoughts were oftener of you than of my other neighbours. What I tell you now is true; you know I never tell a falsehood."

"Can it be possible you should have made this distinction between me and the others?"

"Certainly, I have made it, otherwise I should have a bad heart. Yes, I said to myself, 'No one can be better than M. Germain; only he is a little too serious; but never mind, if I had a friend who wished to marry to be very, very happy, certainly I should advise her to marry M. Germain; for he would be the idol of a nice little housekeeper.'"

"You thought of me for another!" Germain could not prevent himself from saying mournfully.

"It is true; I should have been delighted to see you make a happy marriage, since I loved you as a valued friend. You see I am frank; I tell you everything."

"I thank you from the bottom of my heart; it is a consolation for me to learn that among your friends I was he whom you preferred."

"This was the situation of things when your troubles came. It was then that I received the good and kind letter in which you informed me of what you called your fault; fault! which I think—who am not a scholar—is a good and praiseworthy action; it was then that you asked me to go for those papers which informed me that you had always loved me, without daring to tell me so. These papers, in which I read"—and Rigolette could not restrain her tears—"that, thinking of my future, which sickness, or the want of work might render so painful, you left me, if you should die a violent death, as you feared—you left me the little which you had acquired by force of industry and economy—"

"Yes; for if I were alive and you found yourself without work or sick, it is to me, rather than any one else, that you would address yourself—is it not so? I count on it! speak! speak! I am not mistaken, am I?"

"It is very plain; to whom would you have me apply?"

"Oh! hold; these are words which do good, which are a balm for many sorrows!"

"I cannot express to you what I felt on reading—what a sad word—this *will*, of which each line contained a 'souvenir' of me, or a thought for my welfare; and yet I was not to know these proofs of your attachment until you were no longer in existence. Bless me! what would you? after such generous conduct one is astonished that love should come all at once! yet it is very natural, is it not, M. Germain?"

The girl said these last words with such touching frankness, fixing her large black eyes on those of Germain, that he did not understand her at first, so far was he from thinking himself beloved by Rigolette. Yet these words were so pointed, that their echo resounded from the bottom of the prisoner's heart; he blushed, then became pale, and cried,

"What do you say? I fear—oh!—I am mistaken—I—"

"I say that from the moment in which I found you were so kind to me, and in which I saw you so unhappy, I have loved you otherwise than as a brother, and that if now one of my friends wished to marry," said Rigolette, smiling and blushing, "it is no longer you I should recommend to her, M. Germain."

"You love me! you love me!"

"I must then tell you myself, since you ask me."

"Can it be possible?"

"It is not, however, my fault, for having twice put you in the way to make you comprehend it. But no, my gentleman does not wish to understand a hint; he forces me to confess these things to him. It is wrong, perhaps; but as there is no one here but you to scold me for my effrontery, I have less fear; and, besides," added Rigolette, in a more serious tone, and with deep emotion, "just now you appeared to me so much afflicted, so despairing, that I did not mind it; I have had the self-love to believe that this avowal, made frankly and from the bottom of the heart, would prevent you from being so unhappy for the future. I thought, until now I have had no luck in my efforts to amuse or console him; my dainties take away his appetite, my gaiety makes him weep; this time at least—oh dear me! what is the matter!" cried Rigolette, on seeing Germain conceal his face in his hands. "There tell me now if this is not cruel!" cried she; "no matter what I say or what I do, you remain still unhappy; it is to be too wicked and by far too egotistical also. One would say there was no one but you who suffered."

"Alas, what misery is mine!" cried Germain, with despair. "You love me, when I am no longer worthy of you!"

"No longer worthy of you? There is no good sense in what you say now. It is as if I had said formerly, that I was not worthy of your friendship, because I had been in prison; for, after all, I have also been a prisoner; am I any less an honest girl?"

"But you were sent to prison because you were a poor abandoned child, while I—what a difference!"

"In fine, as to the prison, we have nothing to reproach ourselves for. It is rather I who am presumptuous; for in my situation I ought only to think of marrying some workman. I am a foundling: I possess nothing but my little chamber and my good courage; yet I come boldly and propose to you to take me for a wife."

"Alas! formerly this had been the dream, the happiness of my life! but now—I, under the weight of an infamous accusation, I should abuse your admirable generosity—your pity, which carries you away, perhaps! no—no"

"But," cried Rigolette, with impatience; "I tell you it is not pity, it is love. I only think of you! I sleep no more—I eat no more. Your sad and melancholy looks follow me everywhere. Is that pity? Now, when you speak to me, your voice, your look, go to my heart. There are a thousand things in you

which now please me, and which I had not remarked. I love your face, I love your eyes, I love you, I love your mind, I love your good heart; is this still pity? Why after having loved you as a friend, do I love you as a lover? I do not know! why was I lively and gay when I loved you as a friend? Why am I all changed since I love you as a lover? I do not know. Why have I waited so long to find you both handsome and good? to love you at once with my eyes and my heart? I do not know; or rather, yes, I do know: it is because I have discovered how much you loved me without ever telling it; how much you were generous and devoted. Then love mounted from my heart to my eyes, like as a soft tear mounts there when one is affected."

"Really, I think I am in a dream on hearing you talk thus." "And I, then! I never should have thought it possible that I could dare to tell you all this; but your despair compelled me! Ah, well! now that you know that I love you as my friend, as my lover, as my husband, will you still say it is pity?

The generous scruples of Germain were dispelled in a moment before this avowal, so artless and courageous. A joy unlooked for tore him from his sorrowful meditations.

"You love me!" cried he. "I believe you; your voice, your look, all tells me! I do not wish to ask myself how I have deserved such happiness, I abandon myself to it blindly. My life, my whole life, will not suffice to pay my debt to you! Ah! I have already suffered much, but this moment compensates all!"

"At length you are consoled. Oh! I was very sure, very sure I should succeed!" cried Rigolette, with a burst of charming joy.

"And is it in the midst of the horrors of a prison, and is it when everything oppresses me, that such a felicity—" Germain could not finish. This thought recalling the reality of his position, his scruples for a moment forgotten, returned more cruel than ever, and he resumed with despair: "But I am a prisoner; I am accused of robbery; I shall be condemned perhaps; and I would accept your valorous sacrifice! I would profit by your generous exaltation! Oh, no! no! I am not infamous enough for this!"

"What do you say?"

"I may be condemned to years of imprisonment."

"Well!" answered Rigolette, with calmness and firmness, "they will see that I am a virtuous girl; they will not refuse to mary us in the prison chapel."

"But I may be confined far from Paris."

"Once your wife, I will follow you; I will live in the place where you may be; I will work there, and will come to see you every day!"

"But I shall be disgraced in the eyes of all."

"You love me more than all; don't you?"

"Can you ask me?"

"Then what matters it to you? Far from being disgraced in my eyes, I shall regard you as the martyr of your good heart."

"But the world will condemn, calumniate your choice."

"The world! we will be the world to each other; and then let them talk."

"Finally, on coming out of the prison, my living will be precarious, miserable. Repulsed on all sides, perhaps I shall find no employment; and then, it is horrible to think of; but if this corruption which I dread should, in spite of myself, gain on me, what a future for you!"

"You will not be corrupted; no, for now you know I love you, and this thought will give you strength to resist bad examples. You will think that even if every one should repulse you on your leaving the prison, your wife will receive you with love and gratitude, very certain that you are still an honest man. This language astonishes you, does it not?" "It astonishes *me*." "I do not know where I find what I say to you. It is from the bottom of my heart, assuredly, and that ought to convince you; otherwise, if you disdain an offer which is made from the heart, if you do not wish the attachment of a poor girl who—"

Germain interrupted Rigolette with warmth. "Well! I accept—I accept; yes, I feel that it is sometimes cowardly to refuse certain sacrifices; it is to acknowledge that one is unworthy of them. I accept, noble and courageous girl."

"True! very true! this time!"

"I swear it to you; and, besides, you have spoken words which have struck me — which have given me the courage I wanted."

"What happiness! and what have I said?"

"That for you I ought to remain an honest man. Yes, in this thought I will find the strength to resist the detestable influences which surround me. I will brave the contagion, and will know how to preserve worthy of your love this heart, which belongs to you!"

"Oh! Germain, how happy I am! if I have done anything for you, how you recompense me!"

"And then, do you see, although you excuse my fault, I will not forget its gravity. My task, for the future, shall be doubled—to atone for the past, and deserve the happiness I owe to you. For that I will do good; for, however poor one may be, the occasion is never wanting."

"Alas! that is true; those who are more unfortunate than one's self can always be found."

"In default of money—"

"One gives tears, that which I did for the poor Morels. And it is holy alms: the charity of the heart is worth more than that which gives bread."

"In fine, you accept; you will not retract?"

"Oh! never, never, my friend, my wife; yes, my courage returns; I seem to emerge from a dream; I doubt myself no longer! I wronged myself—happily I wronged myself. My heart would not beat as it does beat if it had lost its noble energy."

"Oh! Germain, how handsome you look while thus speaking! How you reanimate me, not for myself, but for you! Now, you promise, do you not, that, now you have my love to shield you, you will no longer fear to speak to these wicked men in order not to excite their anger against you?"

"Be comforted. On seeing me sad and dejected, they, doubtless, accused me of being a prey to my remorse; and in seeing me joyous and gay, they will think that I have acquired their recklessness."

"It is true; they will suspect you no more, and I shall be happy. So, no imprudence; now you belong to me. I am your little wife?"

At this moment the warder stirred; he awoke.

"Quick!" whispered Rigolette, with a smile full of grace and maiden tenderness; "quick, my husband, give me a sweet kiss on my forehead, through the grating; it will be our betrothal!"

And the girl leaned her face against the iron bars. Germain, profoundly affected, touched with his lips, through the grating, the pure and white forehead.

A tear from the prisoner fell there like a humid pearl.

Oh! touching baptism of this chaste, melancholy, and charming love!

"Ho! ho! already three o'clock!" said the warder, rising from his seat; "and visitors ought to leave at two. Come, my dear;" added he, addressing the grisette, "it is a pity, but you must part."

"Oh! thank you, thank you, sir, for allowing us to talk alone. I have given Germain good courage; he will no longer look so sorrowful, and thus he will have nothing more to fear from his wicked companions. Is it not so, my friend?"

"Be tranquil," said Germain, smiling; "I shall be for the future the gayest in the prison."

"Very good; then they will pay no more attention to you," said the warder.

"Here is a cravat which I have brought for Germain," said Rigolette; "must I leave it at the office?" "It is the rule; but, after all, while I have already transgressed orders, in for a lamb, in for a sheep—come, make the day complete; give him quickly the present yourself." And the warder opened the door.

"The good man is right; the happiness of the day will be complete," said François Germain, on receiving the cravat from the hands of Rigolette, which he tenderly pressed. "Adieu! Now I have no longer any fear to ask you to come and see me as soon as possible."

"Nor I to promise it. Adieu, good Germain."

"Farewell, my own darling!"

"And be sure to make use of my cravat; take care you do not catch cold; it is so damp."

"What a handsome cravat! When I think that you made it for me! oh! I will always keep it," said Germain, carrying it to his lips.

"Now you will have some appetite, I hope. Do you wish that I should make my little dish for you?"

"Certainly, and this time I will do it honour."

"Do not be uneasy, then, Mister Glutton; you shall give me your opinion. Come, once more, adieu. Thank you, Mister Warder; to-day I go away very happy and gratified. Adieu, Germain."

"Adieu, my little wife; soon again!"

"For ever yours!"

Some moments after, Rigolette having put on her pattens, left the prison with a lighter heart than when she entered it.

During the conversation of Germain and the grisette, other scenes were passing in one of the courts of the prison, where we shall now conduct the reader.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LIONS' DEN.

IF the material aspect of a vast house of detention, constructed with every reference to comfort and salubrity claimed by humanity, presents, as we have said, nothing gloomy or sinister, the sight of the prisoners causes a contrary impression.

A person is commonly touched with sadness and pity when he finds himself in the midst of a crowd of female prisoners, in thinking that these unfortunates are almost always forced to crime less from their own will than by the pernicious influence of the first who betrayed them.

And then, again, women the most criminal preserve at the bottom of the heart, two holy ties which the violent action of passions the most detestable, the most impetuous, never break entirely—Love and Maternity! To speak of love and maternity, is to say that with these poor creatures, a soft and pure emotion can still light up here and there the profound gloom of a wretched corruption.

But with men, such as the prison makes them, and casts into the world, there is nothing similar. It is crime of one cast; it is a lump of brass which only becomes red in the fire of infernal passions.

Thus, at the sight of the criminals who encumber the prisons, one is at first seized with a shudder of alarm and horror.

Reflection alone leads you to thoughts more compassionate, but of great bitterness.

Yes, of great bitterness; for one reflects that the vicious population of jails and hulks, the bloody harvest of the executioner, springs up from that mire of ignorance, of misery, and of stupidity. To comprehend this alarming and horrible proposition, let the reader follow us into the Lions' Den.

One of the courts of La Force is thus called.

There are ordinarily placed the prisoners most dangerous for their previous ferocity, or

for the gravity of the accusations which rest upon them.

Nevertheless, it had been found necessary to add to their number temporarily, in consequence of the repairs now going on in the prison, several other prisoners.

These, although equally under the jurisdiction of the Court of Assizes, were almost honest people compared to the habitual inmates of the Lions' Den.

The gloomy, dark, and rainy sky cast a mournful light on the scene we are going to describe. It took place in the middle of the court, which was a vast quadrangle, formed by high white walls, pierced here and there by some grated windows.

At one of the ends of this court was seen a narrow wicket door; at the other, the entrance to the sitting-room, a large paved hall, in the middle of which was a cast iron stove, surrounded by wooden seats, on which were stretched several prisoners, talking among themselves.

Others, preferring exercise to repose, were walking in the courts, in close ranks, four and five together, with locked arms.

One should possess the energetic and sombre pencil of Salvator or of Goya to sketch these diverse specimens of physical and moral ugliness; to describe their hideous habiliments, the variety of costume of these wretches, covered, for the most part, with miserable clothing; for, only being attainted, that is to say, supposed innocents, they were not dressed in the uniform of the penitentiaries; some of them, however, wore it; for, on their entrance into prison, their rags had appeared so dirty, so infectious, that, after the customary bath, they had given to them the cap and coarse gray trowsers of the convict.

A phrenologist would have attentively studied these ghastly and bronzed faces, with their flat foreheads, their cruel and insidious glances, wicked mouths, and brawny necks; almost all offered a frighful resemblance to the brute.

On the cunning features of this, one would find the subtle perfidy of the fox; on another, the sanguinary rapacity of the bird of prey; on the third, the ferocity of the tiger; and on another, again, the animal stupidity of the brute.

The circular walk of this band of silent beings, with bold and contemptuous looks, an insolent and cynical laugh, pressing one against the other, at the bottom of this court, offered something strangely suspicious. It caused a shudder to think that this ferocious horde would be, in a given time, again let loose among mankind, against whom they had declared an implacable warfare. How much sanguinary revenge, how many murderous projects lurk under this appearance of brazen and jeering perversity!

Let us sketch some few of the prominent physiognomies of the Lions' Den, let us leave the the others in the back ground. While one of the warders watched those who were walking, a kind of meeting was held in the hall.

Among those who were present, we will find Barbillon and Nicholas Martial, of whom we shall speak only to remind the reader of their presence.

He who appeared to preside and conduct the discussion, was a prisoner nick-named Skeleton.

He was provost-marshal or captain of the hall. This man, of a good height, and about forty years of age, justified his appropriate nickname by a leanness impossible to be described, which we should call almost osteological.

If the physiognomies of his companions offered more or less analogy to that of the tiger, the vulture, or the fox, the form of his retreating forehead, and his bony, lank, and protruding jaws, supported by a neck of immense length, resembled entirely the conformation of a serpent's head. Total baldness increased this resemblance still more; for, under the rough skin of his reptile-shaped forehead could be distinguished the slightest protuberances, the smallest sutures of his skull; as to his visage, let one imagine some old parchment drawn over the face, and only slightly tightened from the cheek-bone to the angle of the lower jaw, the ligament of which was plainly visible.

The eyes, small and squinting, were so deeply sunken, the eyebrows and cheek-bones so prominent, that under the yellowish forehead could be seen two sockets, literally filled with darkness, and, at a small distance, the eyes seemed to disappear in the bottom of these cavities, two black holes, which gave such a horrible appearance to a skull. His long projecting teeth, were almost constantly displayed by an habitual grin.

Although the emaciated muscles of this man were almost reduced to the condition of tendons, he was of extraordinary strength. The most robust resisted with difficulty the grasp of his long arms, and long, bony fingers. It could be called the grasp of an iron skeleton. He wore a blue smock frock, much too short, which disclosed, and he was proud of them, his sinewy hands and the lower part of his arms, or rather bones (the *radius* and the *cubitus*, the reader will pardon the anatomical designations), wrapped in a rough, blackened skin, and separated by some hard and cord-like veins.

When he placed his hands on a table, he seemed, to use a just metaphor of Pique-Vinaigre, to play a game of cockles.

After having passed fifteen years of his life at the galleys for robbery and attempt at murder, he had broken his ticket of leave, and had been taken in the act of murder and robbery.

This last assassination had been committed under circumstances of such ferocity, that, taking into account he was a robber, this bandit looked upon himself, with, good reason, as already condemned to death.

The influence which the living Skeleton exercised over the other prisoners by his strength and his perversity, had caused him to be chosen by the director of the prison, provost of the dormitory; that is to say, he was charged with the goverment of his ward, as far as regarded the order, arrangements, and neatness of the room

and beds. He acquitted himself perfectly of these functions; and never had the prisoners dared to fail in the duties of which he had the superintendence.

Strange and significant.

The most intelligent directors of prisons, after having tried to invest with the functions of which we speak the prisoners who most recommended themselves by their good conduct, or whose crimes were less grave, had found themselves obliged to deviate in their choice, however logical and moral, and seek for provosts among prisoners the most corrupted, the most feared; these alone could exercise any influence over their companions.

Thus, let us repeat it again, the more a culprit shows audacity and impudence, the more he will be regarded, and, thus to speak, respected.

This fact, proved by experience, sanctioned by the forced choice of which we have spoken is an irrefragable argument against the evil of an imprisonment in common, I say.

Does it not show, even to an absolute evidence, the intensity of the contagion which mortally attacks prisoners in whom there is some hope of restoration.

Yes, for what use of thinking of repentance, amendment, when in this pandemonium, where one must pass many years—his life, perhaps—it is seen that influence is measured by the number and gravity of misdeeds?

The provost of the hall was talking with several prisoners, among whom were Barbillon and Nicholas Martial, we repeat.

"Are you very sure of what you say?" asked he of Martial.

"Yes, yes, a hundred times, yes; Micou had it from Big Cripple, who already wanted to kill the muff, because he betrayed some one."

"Then let some one eat his nose, and put a stop to this!" added Barbillon. "Just now, Skeleton was for giving a stab to this spy Germain."

The provost took his pipe for a moment from his mouth, and said, in a voice so low, so crapulously hoarse, that he could scarcely be heard, "Germain holds up his head; he is a spy; he troubles us: for the less one talks the more one listens. We must make him clear out of the Lions' Lair. Once we make him bleed, they will take him from here."

"Well, then," said Nicolas, "what change is that?"

"There is this change," replied Skeleton, "that if he has sold us, as Big Cripple says, he shall not escape with a small bleeding."

"Very good," said Barbillon.

"There must be an example," said Skeleton, becoming more animated. "Now it is no longer the grabs who find us out: it is the spies. Jacques and Gauthier, guillotined the other day. Roussillon, sent to the galleys for life, sold!"

"And me, and my mother, and Calabash, and my brother at Toulon!" cried Nicholas, "have we not been sold by Bras-Rouge? That is certain now, since, instead of putting him here, they have sent him to La Roquette! They did not dare leave him with us; he knew his treachery, the sneak!"

"And" said Barbillon; "has not Bras-Rouge also sold me?"

"And me," said a young prisoner, in a shrill and reedy voice, lisping in an affected manner, "I was betrayed by Jobert, a man who proposed an affair in the Rue Saint Martin."

This last personage, with the reedy voice, a pale, fat, and effeminate face, and an insidious and cowardly expression, was dressed in a singular manner. He had on his head a red handkerchief, which allowed two locks of white hair to be seen plastered on his temples; the ends of the handkerchief formed a bow over his forehead; he wore, for a cravat, a shawl of white merino with green palms in the corners, on his bosom; his jacket, of maroon coloured cloth, disappeared under the tight waistband of his ample trousers, made of gay Scotch plaid.

"If this is not an indignity! Must a man be a scoundrel?" resumed this gentleman with the pretty voice. "Nothing in the world would have made me suspect Jobert."

"I know that he informed against you," answered the Skeleton, who seemed to patronise this prisoner particularly. "The proof is, that they have done with him as they did with Bras-Rouge: they did not dare leave Jobert here; they locked him up at the Conciergerie. Well, this must be put a stop to: we must have an example. Our traitor brothers carve out work for the police. They think they are sure of their necks because they are put in a different prison from those they have betrayed."

"It is the truth."

"To prevent this, every prisoner must look upon all turncoats, as deadly enemies: if they have blown on Tony, Dick, or Harry, it matters not which, pounce on them. When we have done the job for four or five in the court, the others will wag their tongues twice before they blow the gaff!"

"You are right," said Nicholas; "Germain must die!"

"He shall die," answered the provost; "but let us wait until Big Cripple comes. When he shall have proved to everybody that Germain is a spy, enough said: the sheep will bleat no more; his breath shall be stopped."

"And what shall we do with the warders, who watch us?" asked the prisoner whom the Skeleton called Javotte.

"I have my own idea. Pique-Vinaigre shall serve us."

"He? He is too cowardly."

"And not stronger than a mouse."

"Enough. I understand. Where is he?"

"He returned from the grate, some one came for him to go and patter with his Newgate lawyer."

"And Germain. Is he still at the grate?"

"Yes; with the little mot who comes to see him."

"As soon as he descends, attention. But we must wait for Pique-Vinaigre: we can do nothing without him."

"Without Pique-Vinaigre?"

"No."

"And Germain shall be—"

"I will take charge of it."

"But with what? They have taken away our knives."

"And these hooks, will you put your neck between them?" asked Skeleton, opening his long fingers, hard as iron.

"Choke him?"

"A little."

"But if they know it is you?"

"What's the odds? Am I a calf with two heads, such as is shown in the fair?"

"That is true. One can only be made a head shorter once; and since you are sure of being—"

"Doubly sure: the lawyer told me so yesterday. I have been taken with my hand in the pocket, and my knife in the throat of the stiff un; I am a second comer; it is all over with me. I will send my head to see, in the basket, if it is true that he cheats the condemned, and puts sawdust in, instead of bran, which the government allows us."

"It is true; the guillotined has a right to his bran. My father was cheated, I recollect," said Nicholas Martial, with a ferocious chuckle.

This abominable pleasantry made all the prisoners laugh loudly.

"A thousand thunders!" cried Skeleton. "I wish all the nobs could hear us talk, who think to make us quake before the guillotine. They have only to come to the Barriere Saint Jacques the day of my benefit; they will hear me crack jokes with the crowd, and say to Jack, in a bold voice, 'Open the door till I go down into the cellar!'"

Renewed laughter followed this sally.

"The fact is, that the affair lasts as long as it takes to swallow a mouthful. Draw the bolt; and he open the devil's door for you?" said Skeleton, continuing to smoke his pipe.

"Ah, bah! Is there a devil?"

"Fool! I said that for a joke. There is a knife; a head is placed under, and that is all." "Besides is that our business?" "As for me, now that I know my road, and that I must stop at the tree, I would as soon go to-day as to-morrow," said Skeleton, with savage energy. "I wish I was there now. I feel my blood in my mouth when I think of the crowd who will be there to see me. There will be four or five thousand who will fight or quarrel for places. They will hire out windows and chairs as for a procession. I hear them already cry, 'Window to let! place to let!' And then there will be the troops, cavalry, and infantry. And all this for me—for old Boulard. It is not for an honest man, that they take all this trouble, hey pals? Here is something to make a man proud. Even if he should be as cowardly as Pique-Vinaigre, it would make him resolute. All these eyes which are looking at you give you courage; and it is but a moment to pass; you die boldly; that vexes the judges and the duffers, and encourages a flash cove to die game."

"That is true," replied Barbillon, endeavouring to imitate the frightful boasting. "They think to make us afraid, and confess all, when they send Ketch to open shop on our account.'

"Bah!" said Nicholas, in his turn. "One is not wrong to laugh at the scaffold; it is like the prison and the galleys; we laugh at them also; so long as we are all friends together, 'A short life and a merry one!'"

"For instance," said the prisoner with the lisping voice; "what would be tough, would be to keep us in cells day and night."

"In cells!" cried Skeleton, with a kind of savage alarm. "Do not speak of it. In cells! All alone! I would rather they would cut off my arms and legs. All alone! Between four walls! All alone! No old mates to laugh with! That cannot be! I prefer a hundred times the galleys to the prisons, because at the galleys, instead of being shut up, one is out of doors, sees company, moves about. Well! I would rather a hundred times be a head shorter than be put into a cell only for one year. See here, at this moment, I am sure of being cut down, am I not? Well, let them say to me, 'Would you prefer a year in a cell?' I would stretch out my neck. A year all alone! can this be possible? What would they have one think of when one is all alone?"

"If they were to put you there by force?"

"I would not remain. I would make such use of my feet and hands that I would escape," said Skeleton.

"But if you could not; if you were sure that you could not escape?"

"Then I would kill the first one I could, in order to be guillotined."

"But if, instead of condemning the red-handed to death, they condemned them to a solitary cell for life?"

Skeleton seemed to be staggered by this reflection. After a moment's pause he replied,

"Then I do not know what I should do. I would break my head against the walls. I would allow myself to die with hunger, rather than be in a cell. How? all alone—all my life alone with myself? without the hope of escape? I tell you it is not possible. You know there is no one bolder than I am. I would bleed a man for a crown, and even for nothing, for honour. They think that I have only assassinated two persons; but if the dead could speak, there are five who could tell how I work." The brigand boasted of his crimes.

These sanguinary egotisms are among the most characteristic traits of hardened criminals. A prison governor told us, 'If the pretended murders of which these wretches boast were real, population would be decimated.'

"So I say," replied Barbillon, boasting in his turn; "they think that I only laid out the milkwoman's husband in the City; but I have served many others out, with Big Robert, who was shortened last year."

"It was only to tell you," said Skeleton, "that I neither fear fire nor the devil. But, if I were in a cell, and very sure of not being able to escape—thunder! I believe I should be afraid."

"Of what?" asked Nicholas.

"Of being all alone," answered the cock of the walk. "So, if you had to recommence your robberies and murders, and, instead of prisons, galleys, and guillotine, there were only cells, you would hesitate?"

"Yes — perhaps" (*a fact*), answered the Skeleton.

And he spoke the truth.

A noisy burst of laughter, and exclamations of joy proceeding from the prisoners who were walking in the court, interrupted the meeting.

Nicholas rose precipitately, and advanced towards the door to ascertain the cause of this unaccustomed noise.

"It is the Big Cripple!" cried Nicholas, returning. "The Big Cripple?" said the provost; "and Germain, has he descended from the talking-room?"

"Not yet," said Barbillon.

"Let him hurry then," said Skeleton, "that I may give him an order for a new coffin."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PLOT.

BIG CRIPPLE whose arrival had been hailed by the prisoners in the Lions' Den, with such noisy joy, and whose denunciation was to be so fatal to Germain, was a man of middle stature; notwithstanding his obesity and his infirmity, he seemed active and vigorous. His bestial physiognomy as was the case with most of his companions, much resembled a bull-dog's; his low forehead, his little yellow eyes, his falling cheeks, his heavy jawbones, of which the lower, projecting beyond the other, was armed with long teeth, or rather, broken tusks, which protruded over the lips, rendered this animal resemblance still more striking; he had on his head an otter-skin cap, and wore over his coat a blue cloak with a fur collar.

He entered the hall, accompanied by a man of about thirty years of age, whose brown and sun-burned face seemed less degraded than those of the other prisoners, although he affected to appear as resolute as his companion; sometimes his face became clouded, and he smiled bitterly.

The Cripple found himself, to use a vulgar expression, quite at home. He could hardly reply to the felicitations and welcomes which were addressed to him from all sides.

"Here you are at last, my jolly bloke! So much the better; we shall have a laugh."

"We wanted you, old son!"

"You have stayed away a long time."

"Yet I have done all I could to return to my friends. It is not my fault if they would not have me sooner."

"Just so, my crummy mate; no one will come of his own accord to be caged; but once there, one must enjoy himself."

"You are in luck, for Pique-Vinaigre is here."

"He also? an old Melun chum! famous, famous, he will help us pass the time with his stories, and customers will not be wanting, for I announce some recruits." "Who then?"

"Just now, at the office, while they were enrolling me, they brought in two young coves. One I do not know; but the other, who wore a blue cotton cap and a gray blouse, struck my eye. I have seen the fellow somewhere. I think it was in the White Rabbit; a very fine-looking prig."

"Say now, Big Cripple, do you recollect at Melun, I bet you, before a year you would be nabbed?"

"That is true; you have won; but I had more chances to be a second comer than to be medalled; but what have you done?"

"On the American lay."

"Ah! good, always the same fashion?"

"Always; I go my own nice little road. This trick is common; but yokels are also common; and if it had not been for the ignorance of my *bonnet*, I should not be here." "Never mind, the lesson will be of service."

"When I begin again, I will take my precautions; I have my plan."

"Ah, here is Cardillac," said the Cripple, seeing a man approach, miserably dressed, with a low, cunning, and wicked expression, which partook of the fox and the wolf. "Good-day, old man."

"Come, come, limpy," answered Cardillac gaily; "they said every day, he will come. You do like the pretty women one must wish for."

"Yes, yes." "Oh!" continued Cardillac; "is it for something a little uppish that you are here?" "My dear, I went in for a burglary. Before I had done some good business; but the last failed, a superb affair; which, however, still remains to be done. Unfortunately, me and Frank, whom you see, missed our mark!"

He pointed to his companion, on whom all eyes were turned.

"So it is true, here is Frank!" said Cardillac. "I would not have known him on account of his beard. Is it you? I thought that at this present moment you were at least the mayor of your district. You wished to play honest?"

"I was a fool, and I have been punished," said Frank, roughly; "but pardon for all sinners; it was good for once; now I belong to the *forty* until I die; look out when I am released; hang 'em!"

"Very good, that is the style!"

"But what has happened to you, Frank?"

"What happens to all liberated prisoners who are fools enough, as you say, to play honest. Their fate is so just! On coming out of Melun, I had saved nine hundred and odd francs."

"It is true," said the Cripple, "all his misfortunes come from his having saved this money instead of spending it. You will see what repentance leads to, and whether one pays his expenses by it."

"They sent me to Etampes," resumed Frank;

"locksmith by trade, I went to seek employment; I said, 'I am a released convict; I know no one likes to employ them, but here are 900 francs of my savings; give me work, my money shall be your guarantee; I wish to labour and be honest."

"On my word, there is no one but Frank could have such ideas."

"I proposed, then, my savings as a guarantee to the master locksmith, so that he might give me work. 'I am not a banker, to take money on interest,' said he. 'I do not wish convicts in my shop; I work in houses, open the doors the keys of which are lost, my trade is a confidential one, and if it were known that I had a convict among my workmen, I should lose my customers. Good-night, neighbour.' Did he not, Cardillac, get what he deserved. ?"

"Most certainly."

"Childish !" added the Cripple, addressing Frank in a paternal manner, "instead of tearing your ticket at once, and coming to Paris to fritter away your savings, so as to be without a sou in your pocket, and compelled to rob. Then one finds superb ideas."

"You tell me always the old story," said Frank, with impatience; "it is true, I was wrong not to spend my money, since I have not enjoyed it. As there were only four locksmiths at Etampes, he to whom I had first spoken had blabbed; when I addressed myself to the others, they told me the same as their fellow. Thank you; everywhere the same song. So you see, friends, where is the use? We are marked for life! Behold me on a strike in the streets of Estampes! I lived on my money for two months," said Frank; "the money went, and no work came. I broke my leave. I left Etampes."

"That's what you should have done before."

"I came to Paris; then I found some work; my master did not know who I was! I told him I came from the country. There was no better workman than I myself. I placed 700 francs, which remained of my savings, with a broker, who gave me a note; when it fell due, he did not pay; I placed my note in the hands of an attorney, who sued and recovered; I left my money with him, and I said to myself, 'It is for a rainy day.' Then I met the Big Cripple."

"Yes, pals, and I was his rainy day, as you will see. Frank was a locksmith; he manufactured keys; I had an affair in which he could serve me; I proposed it to him; I had impressions; he had only to copy them. The lad refused; he wished to become honest; I said to myself, 'I must do him good in spite of himself.' I wrote a letter, without a signature, to his master, another to his companions, to inform them that Frank was a released convict. The master turned him out of doors, and his companions turned their backs upon him. He went to another master; worked there a week; same game. If he had gone to ten more I would have served him the same."

"I did not then suspect that it was you who denounced me," said Frank, "otherwise you might have had it hot !"

"Yes; but I was no fool; I told you I was going to Lonjumeau to see my uncle; but I remained at Paris; and I knew all you did through little Ledru."

"In short, they drove me away from my last master like a beggar, fit only to hang. Work then! be peaceable! so that one may say to you, not, what are you doing? but, what have you done? Once in the street, I said to myself, 'Happily I have my money left.' I went to the attorney; he had cleared out—my money was gone—I was without a sou. I had not enough to pay my week's rent. You ought to have seen my rage! Thereupon Big Cripple pretended to arrive from Lonjumeau; he profited by my anger. I did not know on what peg to hang myself. I saw there was no means to be honest; that, once a robber, one was in for it for life! the Cripple kept so close at my heels."

"Let Frank scold no more," said the Cripple, "he took his part boldly; he entered into the put-up thing; it promised great things. Unfortunately the moment we opened our mouths to swallow the morsel, nabbed by the police! What would you, it is a misfortune. The trade would be too fine without this."

"I don't care. If that confounded lawyer had not robbed me, I should not be here," said Frank, with rage.

"The Skeleton is here !" said Cardillac, pointing out the provost, who had just appeared at the door, to his companion.

"Cadet, advance at the call !" said Skeleton, to the Cripple.

"Here !" he answered, advancing into the hall, accompanied by Frank, whom he took by the arm.

During the conversation of Cripple, Frank, and Cardillac, Barbillon had gone, by orders of the provost, to recruit twelve or fifteen prisoners, picked men. These, not to excite the suspicions of the keeper, had gone separately to the hall.

The other prisoners remained in the yard, some of them, following the instructions of Barbillon, spoke in a loud, quarrelsome tone, to attract the notice of the keeper, and thus call his attention away from the hall, where were soon assembled Barbillon, Nicholas, Frank, Cardillac, Big Cripple, the Skeleton, and some fifteen other prisoners, all waiting with impatient curiosity until the provost should take the chair.

Barbillon, charged as spy to announce the approach of the superintendent, placed himself near the door. The Skeleton taking his pipe from his mouth, said to the Big Cripple:

"Do you know a young man named Germain, with blue eyes, brown hair, and the air of a swell cove?"

"Germain here !" cried Cripple, whose features expressed at once surprise, hatred, and anger.

"You do know him, then?"

"Don't I know him? My friend, I denounce him! he is a betrayer! he must be rolled up!"

"Yes, yes!" said the prisoners together.

"Is it very sure thathe has denounced?" asked Frank. "Suppose you should be mistaken, and injure a man who does not deserve it!"

This observation displeased the Skeleton, who leaned towards the Cripple, and whispered,

"Who is this?" "A man with whom I have worked." "Are you sure of him?"

"Yes; only he is not made of gall—but treacle!"

"Enough; I'll keep my eye upon him."

"Let us hear how Germain is a spy?" said a prisoner.

"Explain yourself, Cripple," resumed the Skeleton, who watched Frank closely.

"Here you are, said the Cripple. "A Nantes man, named Velu, an old convict, brought up this young fellow, whose parents are unknown. When he was old enough, he placed him in a banking-house at Nantes, intending to make use of him for an affair he had in view. He had two strings to his bow—a forgery, and robbery of the banker's strong box! perhaps a hundred thousand francs to gain by the two. All is ready; Velu counted on the young man as on himself; this blackguard slept in the room where the strong box was kept; Velu told him his plan; Germain neither said yes nor no, but told his master all about it, and left the same evening for Paris."

The prisoners uttered violent threats and murmurs of indignation.

"If he is a betrayer, we must settle him."

"If any one wishes it, I'll pick a quarrel, and I'll brain him."

"We must write on his face an order for the hospital."

"Silence in the gang!" cried Skeleton, in an imperious tone. "Continue!" he said to the Cripple; and he recommenced smoking.

"Believing that Germain had said yes, counting on his aid, Velu and two of his mates attempted the affair the same night; the banker was on his guard, one of Velu's pals was nabbed in climbing in at a window, and he himself had the luck to escape. He arrived in Paris, furious at having been betrayed by Germain, and foiled in a tiptop job. One fine day he met the nice young man: it was broad day; he did not dare to touch him; but he followed him; he saw where he lived, and one night me, Velu, and little Ledru, pounced upon Germain. Unfortunately he escaped us; he left his nest in the Rue de Temple, and since that time we have not been able to find him; but if he is here, I demand—"

"You have nothing to demand," said the Skeleton with authority. The Cripple was silent. "I take your bargain; you make over to me the skin of Germain, I'll take it off. I am not called Skeleton for nothing. I am dead in advance; my grave is already dug at Clamart; I risk nothing in working for the leary coves; the spies devour us more than the police; they place the turncoats of La Force at La Roquette, and those of La Roquette, at the Conciergerie, where they think themselves safe. Stop a bit, when each prison shall have killed its pet, no matter where he has denounced, that will take away the appetite from the others. I set the example—they will follow."

All the prisoners admiring the resolution announced, crowded around him. Barbillon himself, instead of remaining at the door, joined the group, and did not perceive that a new prisoner had entered the hall.

This new comer, clothed in a gray blouse, and wearing a cap of blue cotton embroidered with red wool, pulled well over his eyes, started on hearing the name of Germain; then he went in among the Skeleton's admirers, and loudly approved both with voice and gesture the determination of the provost.

"Isn't Bones a mad-cap?" said one.

"What a learned man!"

"The devil himself could not scare him."

"There's a man!"

"If all the family had his cheek, it would be they who would judge and guillotine the honest fools."

"That would be just; every one in his turn."

"Yes; but they won't agree upon that subject."

"All the same; he renders a famous service to the family by killing them; the betrayers will denounce no more."

"That is certain."

"And since Skeleton is so sure of being cut down, it costs him nothing to kill the beggars."

"I think it cruel to kill this young man!" said Frank.

"What! what!" cried Skeleton, in angry tone; "one has no right to pay off a traitor?"

"Yes, true, he is a traitor; so much the worse for him," said Frank, after a moment's reflection.

These last words, and the assurances of Cripple, calmed the suspicions which Frank for a moment had raised among the prisoners. Skeleton alone remained doubtful.

"What shall we do with the keeper?"

"Tell us, Doomed-to-Death?" said Nicholas, laughing.

"Well! some will engage his attention on one side." "No: we will hold him by force."

"Yes."

"No."

"Silence in the gang!" cried Skeleton.

The most profound quiet ensued.

"Listen to me well," resumed the provost, in a hoarse voice; "there are no means to do the job while the keeper is in the ward, or the court. I have no knife; there will be some stifled cries—the sneak will struggle."

"Then what is to be done?"

"This is my plan: Pique-Vinaigre has promised to relate to us to-day, after dinner, his story of Gringalet and Cut-in-half. It rains, we will all retire here, and the beggar will come and take his seat in the corner, in his usual place. We will give some sous to Pique-Vinaigre to make him commence his story. It

will be the dinner hour. The keeper seeing us quietly occupied in listening to the nonsense, will have no suspicions; he will go and take a pull at the canteen. As soon as he has left the court, we have a quarter of an hour to ourselves—the turncoat will be done up before the warder returns. I take it upon myself. I have done the trick for stouter fellows than he. I wish no help."

"A moment," said Cardillac; "the bailiff always comes lounging here at dinner-time. If he should enter the hall to listen to Pique-Vinaigre, and should see us fixing Germain, he is likely to sing out for help; he is not fly; look out."

"That is true," said the Skeleton.

"A bailiff here!" cried Frank, the victim of Boulard; with astonishment. "And what is his name?"

"Boulard," said Cardillac.

"It is my man," cried Frank, doubling his fists; "it is he who stole my savings."

"The bailiff?" asked the provost.

"Yes; seven hundred and twenty francs which he collected for me."

"You know him? he has seen you?" asked Skeleton.

"I should think I had seen him, to my sorrow. But for him I should not be here."

These regrets sounded badly in the ears of Skeleton; he fixed his squinting eyes on Frank, who answered some questions of his comrades; then leaning over towards the Cripple whispered in a low tone, "Here is a kid who is capable of informing the keepers of our plant."

"No: I answer for him; he will denounce no one, but he is still a little timid about crime, and he might be capable of defending Germain. Better get him out of the way."

"Enough," said Skeleton, and he said in a loud tone, "I say, Frank, won't you have a settlement with this rascally bailiff?"

"Let me alone; let him come, his account is made out."

"He is coming, get ready."

"I am all ready; he will bear my mark."

"That will make a scuffle; they will send the bailiff to his cell, and Frank to the dungeon," whispered Skeleton to the Cripple, "we shall get rid of both."

"What a head! Is he not a trump?" said the robber, with admiration; then he resumed aloud, "Shall Pique-Vinaigre be informed that by the assistance of his story we mean to stuff the keeper and finish the traitor?"

"No; Pique-Vinaigre has too much milk in his composition, and is too great a coward; if he knew it he would not tell his story; the blow struck, he will bear his part."

The dinner-bell rang.

"To your grub, mates!" said Skeleton; "Pique-Vinaigre and Germain are going to enter the court. Attention, friends! you call me Doomed-to-Death! all right, the denouncer is in the same boat!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE PATTERER.

THE new prisoner of whom we have spoken, who wore a blue cotton cap and gray blouse, had attentively listened to, and energetically approved the plot which threatened the life of Germain. This man, of athletic form, left the sitting-room with the other prisoners, without having been remarked, and soon mingled with the different groups that pressed into the court around the persons who distributed the beef, which they brought in brass kettles, and the bread, in huge baskets.

Each prisoner received a piece of boiled beef, which had served to make the soup for the morning meal, with half a loaf of bread, superior in quality to that given to soldiers.

The prisoners who had money could buy wine at the canteen, and go there to drink.

Those who, like Nicholas, had received victuals from out of doors, got up a feast to which they invited the other prisoners. The guests of the widow's son were Barbillon, Skeleton, and, upon the latter's recommendation, Pique-Vinaigre, in order to get him in a good humour for telling stories.

The ham, hard eggs, cheese, and white bread, due to the forced liberality of Micou the receiver, were spread out on one of the benches, and Skeleton prepared to do honour to this repast, without feeling any inquietude concerning the murder he was about to commit.

"Go and see if Pique-Vinaigre is never coming. While I am waiting to choke Germain, I choke with hunger and thirst; do not forget to say to the Big Cripple that Frank must pull the bailiff's hair, so that we may be rid of them both."

"Be easy, if Frank does not pitch into the tipstaff, it will not be our fault."

And Nicholas left the sitting-room.

At this moment, Boulard entered the yard smoking a cigar, his hands plunged into his long surtout of gray moleskin, his cap drawn over his ears, his face smiling and gay; he spied Nicholas, who, on his side, looked at Frank.

The latter and the Cripple were dining, seated on one of the benches in the court; they had not perceived the bailiff, on whom their backs were turned. Faithful to the Skeleton's recommendations, Nicholas, seeing with the corner of his eye, Boulard coming towards him, appeared not to remark him, and drew nearer to Frank and the Cripple.

"Good-day," said the bailiff to Nicholas.

"Ah! good-day, master, I did not see you; you come, as usual, to take a little walk?"

"Yes, my boy, and to-day I have two reasons for doing it. I am going to tell you why; but first take these cigars. Come, now, among comrades—the devil! one must not stand on ceremony."

"Thank you, my gentleman. Why have you two reasons for walking?"

"You will understand it, my boy; I do not

feel any appetite to-day. I said to myself, looking at these gay boys at their dinner, and seeing them make use of their jaws, perhaps hunger will come."

"Not so bad. But look this way if you wish to see two babies who eat lustily," said Nicholas, leading the bailiff by degrees near the bench of Frank, whose back was turned; "just look at these two *swallow-raws*, your hunger will come as if you had eaten a whole bottle of pickles."

"Oh! let us see this phenomenon," said Boulard.

"I say, Big Cripple!" cried Nicholas.

The Big Cripple and Frank quickly turned their heads. The bailiff was stupified, and stood with his mouth open on recognising him whom he had swindled.

Frank, throwing his bread and meat on the bench, with one bound jumped at Boulard, whom he caught by the throat, crying,

"My money!"

"How? What?—You strangle me. I—"

"My money!"

"My friend, listen to me."

"My money! And yet it is too late, for it is your fault that I am here."

"But—I—but—"

"If I go to the hulks, mark me, it is your fault; for if I had that of which you robbed me, I should not have been under the necessity of stealing. I should have remained honest as I wished to be. And you will be acquitted, perhaps—they will do nothing to you. But I will do something to you. You shall bear my marks. Ah! you wear jewels, gold chains, and you rob! There—there—have you enough? No—here, take some more?"

"Help! help!" cried the bailiff, rolling under the feet of Frank, who struck him furiously.

The other prisoners, very indifferent to this squabble, made a ring round the combatants, or, rather, round the beating and the beaten, for Boulard, panting and much alarmed, made no resistance, but endeavoured to parry, as well as he could, the blows of his adversary.

Happily, the overseer ran up, on hearing the cries, and released the bailiff from his peril.

Boulard arose, pale and trembling, with one of his large eyes bruised, and, without giving himself time to pick up his cap, cried, as he ran towards the wicket;

"Keeper—open for me; I do not wish to remain a moment longer—help!"

"And you, for having struck the gentleman, follow me to the governor," said the keeper, taking Frank by the collar; "you will go to the blackhole two days for this."

"I don't care; he has got his gruel!

"Mum!" whispered the Cripple to Frank, pretending to adjust his clothes, "not a word of what they are going to do to the spy!"

"Be easy; perhaps, if I had been there, I should have defended him; for to kill a man for that is hard; but blab! never."

"Will you come?" said the keeper.

"There, we are rid of the bailiff and Frank now; hot work for the spy!" said Nicholas.

As Frank left the court, Germain and Pique-Vinaigre entered.

Germain was no longer recognisable; his physiognomy, formerly so sad and cast down, was radiant with joy; he carried his head erect, and cast around him a cheerful and assured glance: he was beloved!—the horrors of the prison disappeared from before his eyes.

Pique-Vinaigre followed him with an embarrassed air; at length, after having hesitated two or three times to accost him, he made a great effort, and slightly touched the arm of Germain before he had approached the group of prisoners, who, at a distance, were examining him with sullen hatred. Their victim could not escape.

In spite of himself, Germain shuddered at the touch of Pique-Vinaigre; for the face and rags of the ex-juggler did not speak much in his favour. But, recollecting the advice of Rigolette, and, besides, too happy not to be friendly, Germain stopped, and said kindly to Pique-Vinaigre;

"What do you wish?"

"To thank you."

"For what?"

"For what your pretty little visitor wishes to do for my sister."

"I do not understand you," said Germain, surprised.

"I am going to explain. Just now, in the office, I met the overseer, who was on guard in the visitors' room."

"Ah, yes; a very good man."

"Ordinarily, the jailers do not agree with that description. But Roussel is another bird; he deserves it. Just now he whispered in my ear, 'Pique-Vinaigre, my boy, do you know Germain well?' 'Yes; the butt of the yard,' I answered." Then, interrupting himself, Pique-Vinaigre said to Germain, "Pardon, excuse me, if I have called you a butt. Do not think of it; wait for the end. 'Yes, then,' I answered, 'I know Germain the butt of the prison.' 'And yours also, perhaps, Pique-Vinaigre?' asked the keeper, in a severe tone. 'I am too cowardly and too good-natured to allow myself any kind of a butt, black, white, or gray, and Germain still less than any other; for he does not appear wicked, and they are unjust towards him.' 'Well, Pique-Vinaigre, you have reason to be on Germain's side, for he has been good to you.' 'To me? How so?' 'That is to say, not to you; but, saving that, you owe him great gratitude,' answered old Roussel."

"Let us see; explain yourself a little more clearly," said Germain, smiling.

"That is exactly what I said to the keeper: 'Do speak more clearly.' Then he answered, 'It is not Germain, but his pretty little visitor, who has been full of kindness for your sister. She overheard her relate to you her misfortunes, and, as she was about leaving, the girl offered her any assistance she could render.'"

"Good Rigolette!" cried Germain, affected. "She took good care not to mention it."

"'Oh! then,' I answered the keeper, I am

only a gander. You are right; Germain has been good to me; for his visitor is, as may be said, himself, and my sister Jeanne is myself and much more.'"

"Poor little Rigolette!" said Germain. "This does not surprise me; she has a heart so generous and susceptible."

"The keeper went on: 'I heard all this without pretending to listen. Now you know, if you do not try to render a service to Germain; if you do not warn him in case of any plot against him, you will be a finished scoundrel, Pique-Vinaigre.' 'Keeper, I am a scoundrel,' commenced I, 'it is true; but not a finished scoundrel. In fine, since Germain's visitor wished to do some good to my poor Jeanne, who is a good and honest girl, I will do for Germain what I can; unfortunately, that will be no great things.'

"'Never mind, do what you can; I am also going to give you some good news for Germain; I have just heard it.'"

"What is it, then?" asked Germain.

"'To-morrow there will be a separate cell vacant,' the keeper told me to inform you."

"Can it be true? Oh! what happiness!" cried Germain. "The good man was right; it is good news you tell me."

"I think so, for your place is not with rough-scuff like us, Germain." Then he added hastily, and in a low tone, as he pretended to stoop for something, "Germain; look at the prisoners, how they stare at us; they are astonished to see us talking together. I leave you; be on your guard. If they pick a quarrel, do not answer; they only want a pretext to engage you in a dispute, and beat you. Barbillon is to begin the dispute—look out for him; I will try to turn them from this notion." And Pique-Vinaigre lifted up his head as if he had found what he pretended to look for. Only informed of the conspiracy of the morning, which was to provoke a quarrel in which Germain would be roughly handled, in order to force the governor to change his ward, not only was Pique-Vinaigre ignorant of the murderous project, but he was also ignorant that they counted on his story of Gringalet to deceive and distract the attention of the keeper.

"Come along, lazy-bones," said Nicholas to Pique-Vinaigre, going to meet him; "leave your ration of flesh there; we have a merry-making and feasting. I invite you."

"Whereabouts? to the Panier Fleuri? to the Petit Ramponneau?"

"No, in the hall; the table is set on a bench. We have some ham, eggs, and cheese—my treat."

"That suits me; but it is a pity to lose my ration, and still more that my sister cannot profit by it. Neither she nor her children often see meat, except at the butcher's door."

"Come, come quick, Skeleton is making a beast of himself; he is capable of devouring the whole with Barbillon."

Nicholas and Pique-Vinaigre entered the hall; seated astride on the end of the bench where the feast was spread, Skeleton swore and cursed while waiting for the giver of the banquet.

"Here you are at last, snail, laggard!" cried the bandit, at the sight of Pique-Vinaigre; "what have you been doing, then?"

"He was chatting with Germain," said Nicholas, carving the ham.

"Oh! talking with Germain?" said Skeleton, looking attentively at Pique-Vinaigre, without pausing in his mastication.

"Yes!" answered the patterer, "Oh! here is another who never invented bootjacks and hard eggs (I say eggs because I adore them.) Isn't he a fool! this Germain! I used to think that he was a spy, but he is too much of a flat for that!"

"Oh! you think so?" said Skeleton, exchanging a rapid and significant glance with Nicholas and Barbillon.

'I am as sure of it as that I see ham! And, then, how the devil would you have him spy? he is always alone; he speaks to no one, and no one speaks to him; he runs away from us as if we had the cholera. Besides, he will not spy for a long time; he is going to be boxed up alone."

"He!" cried Skeleton; when?"

"To-morrow morning there will be a cell vacant."

"You see we must kill him at once. He does not sleep in my ward; to-morrow will be too late. To-day we have only until four o'clock, and now it is almost three," whispered Skeleton to Nicholas, while Pique-Vinaigre talked with Barbillon.

"All the same," answered Nicholas aloud, pretending to answer an observation of Skeleton. "Germain looks as if he despises us."

"On the contrary, my children," answered Pique-Vinaigre, "you intimidate this young man. He looks upon himself, in comparison with you, as the least of the least. Just now, what do you think he said?"

"How should I know?"

"He said to me, 'You are very happy, Pique-Vinaigre, to dare to speak with the famous Skeleton (he used the word famous) as an equal and a companion. I am dying to speak to him; but he produces an effect upon me so respectful—so respectful—that, should I see the chief of police in flesh, and bones, and uniform, I could not be more overcome."

"He told you that;" replied Skeleton, feigning to believe him, and to be flattered at the admiration he excited in Germain.

"As true as that you are the greatest magsman on the earth, he told me so."

"Then it is different," answered Skeleton; "I must make it up with him. Barbillon had a mind to pick a quarrel, but he, too, will do well to let him alone."

"He will do better," cried Pique-Vinaigre, persuaded that he had turned away the danger with which Germain was threatened. "He will do better, for this poor fellow won't dispute, he is one of my kind, bold as a hare."

"Yes it is a pity," said Skeleton: "we reckon

ed on this quarrel to amuse us after dinner, the time appears so long."

"Yes. What shall we do, then?" asked Nicholas.

"Since it is so, let Pique-Viniagre tell us a story. I will not seek a quarrel with Germain," said Barbillon.

"Agreed, agreed!" cried the story-teller. "That is one condition; but there is another, and without both I tell no stories."

"Come, what is your other condition!"

"It is, that the honourable society which is poisoned with capitalists," said Pique-Vinaigre, assuming his mountebank twang, "will make for me the trifle of a contribution of twenty sous. Twenty sous, ladies and gents, to hear the famous Pique-Vinaigre, who has had the honour to perform before the most renowned robbers, before the most famous rogues of France and Navarre, and who is immediately expected at Brest and at Toulon, where he goes by order of the government. Twenty sous! A mere nothing, gents."

"Come, you shall have twenty sous when you have told your story."

"After? No; before!" cried Pique-Vinaigre.

"I say, do you think us capable of cheating you out of twenty sous?" said Skeleton, with a displeased air.

"Not at all," answered Pique-Vinaigre; "I honour the family with my confidence, and it is to spare its purse that I ask twenty sous in advance."

"On your word of honour."

"Yes, gents; for, after my tale is finished, you will be so satisfied that it is no longer twenty sous, but twenty francs—a hundred francs that you will force me to take! I know, myself, I should have the *meanness* to accept the offering; so, you see, that, for economy's sake, you will do better to give me twenty sous in advance."

"Oh; you are not wanting in soft sawder."

"I have nothing but my tongue; I must use it; and then, the point of the matter is, that my sister and her children are in Queer Street, and twenty sous is an out-and-out *friendly call!*"

"Why does she not toddle out on the prigging lay; and her kids also, if they are old enough?" said Nicholas.

"Do not speak of it; it wounds me, it dishonours me. I am too good."

"You had better say too stupid, since you encourage her."

"It is true, I encourage her in the vice of honesty. But she is only good for that trade—she makes me pity her. Come, is it agreed? I will relate to you my famous history of 'Gringalet;' but I must have my twenty sous; and Barbillon will not seek a quarrel with that softy, Germain."

"You shall have your twenty sous, and Barbillon will not pick a quarrel with Germain," said Skeleton.

"Then open your ears, for you are going to hear something choice. But here is the rain, which sends in the audience; there will be no need to go after them."

In fact, the rain began to fall, the prisoners left the court, and came to take refuge in the hall, accompanied by a keeper. We have already said this hall was a long paved room, lighted by windows looking out on the court; in the centre was placed the stove, near which were Skeleton, Barbillon, Nicholas, and Pique-Vinaigre. At a nod from the provost, Big Cripple joined the group.

Germain entered among the last, absorbed in delightful thoughts. He went mechanically to seat himself on the ledge of the farthest window in the room, a place he habitually occupied, which no one disputed; for it was far from the stove, around which the prisoners clustered.

We have said that only a dozen of the prisoners had been informed at first of the intended murder of Germain. But, once divulged, this project counted as many adherents as there were prisoners; these wretches, in their blind cruelty, regarded this frightful plot as a legitimate vengeance, and saw in it a certain guarantee against future denunciations.

Germain, Pique-Vinaigre, and the keeper were alone ignorant of what was about to take place. The general attention was divided between the executioner, the victim, and the patterer, who was about innocently to deprive Germain of the only succour which he had to depend upon; for it was almost certain that the keeper, seeing the prisoners attentive to the story of Pique-Vinaigre, would believe his presence useless, and profit by this moment of calm to go and take his repast.

When all the prisoners had entered, Skeleton said to the keeper,

"I say old man, Pique-Vinaigre has a good idea: he is going to tell us his story of 'Grin-galet.' The weather is so bad it is not fit to turn a constable out of doors; we are going to wait here quietly for the time to turn in."

"True enough, when he talks, you keep yourselves quiet. At least there is no need of being behind your backs."

"Yes," replied Skeleton; but Pique-Vinaigre charges high for telling a story: he wants twenty sous."

"Yes, the trifle of twemty sous; and then it is for nothing," cried Pique-Vinaigre. "Yes, nothing; for one should not keep a red in his pocket, and thus deprive himself of the pleasure of hearing the adventures of poor little Gringalet, of the terrible Cut-in-Half, and the wicked Gargousse; it is enough to break one's heart, to make your hair stand on end. Now, gents, who is it that cannot spare the bagatelle of four coppers, to have his heart broken and his hair stand on end?"

"I give two sous!" said Skeleton; and he threw his penny towards Pique-Vinaigre. "Shall the gang be stingy for such an entertainment?" he added, looking at his accomplices with a significant air. Several sous were thrown, from one side and the other, to the great joy of Pique-Vinaigre, who thought of his sister as he

made his collection. "Eight, nine, eleven, twelve, thirteen!" he cried, picking up his money! "come, rich folks, capitalists and other bankers, one more little effort; you cannot remain at thirteen, it is an unlucky number. Only seven sous wanting—a paltry seven sous! How, shall it be said the Lions' Den cannot raise seven sous more—seven miserable sous! Oh! you will lead me to think that you have been placed here unjustly, or that you have been very unlucky."

The piercing voice and the witticisms of Pique-Vinaigre had roused Germain from his reverie; as much to follow the advice of Rigolette, to make himself popular, as to make a slight donation to this poor fellow who had shown some desire to be useful to him, he arose and threw a piece of ten sous at the speaker's feet, who cried, showing to the crowd the generous donor,

"Ten sous, gents! you see I spoke of capitallists; honour to the banker, who tries to be agreeable to the society. Yes, gents! for it is to him you will owe the greater part of Gringalet, and you will thank him for it. As to the three sous surplus caused by his donation, I will deserve them by imitating the voices of my personages, instead of speaking in my ordinary manner! This shall be another delight that will owe to this rich capitalist whom you must adore."

"Come, don't gammon so much, but begin," said Skeleton.

"A moment," said Pique-Vinaigre; "it is but just that this capitalist, who has given me ten sous, should have the best place, except our provost, who must choose first." This proposition answered the purpose of Skeleton so well, that he cried,

"It is true, after me he should be the best seated." And the bandit again cast a look of intelligence at the prisoners.

"Yes, yes, let him approach," they cried.

"Let him take the front seat."

"You see, young man, your liberality is recompensed; the honourable society recognises that you have the right to the first seat," said Pique-Vinaigre to Germain.

Believing that his liberality had really disposed his odious companions in his favour, enchanted thus to follow the advice of Rigolette, Germain, in spite of his repugnance, left his seat, and approached.

Pique-Vinaigre, aided by Nicholas and Barbillon, having arranged around the stove the four or five benches, said with emphasis,

"Here are orchestra stalls! honour to whom honour is due; in the first place the capitalist. Now, let those who have paid seat themselves on the benches," added Pique-Vinaigre, gaily, firmly believing that Germain had, thanks to him, no more danger to apprehend. "And those who have not cashed up," he added, "will sit on the ground or stand up, as they choose."

Let us glance at the arrangements as now completed.

Pique-Finaigre, standing near the stove, was getting ready to commence his story.

Near him, Skeleton is also standing, ready to spring on Germain the moment the keeper should leave the hall.

Some distance from Germain, Nicholas, Barbillon, Cardillac, and some other prisoners, among whom was seen the man in the blue cotton cap and gray blouse, occupied the back benches.

The larger number of the prisoners grouped here and there, some seated on the ground, others standing and leaning against the walls, composed the background of this picture, lighted, after the manner of Rembrandt, by the three lateral windows, which cast a vivid light and deep shade on these figures, so differently characterized and so strongly marked.

The keeper, who, without knowing it, was, by his departure, to give the signal for the murder of Germain, stood near the half-opened door.

"All ready?" said Pique-Vinaigre to Skeleton.

"Silence in the band," answered the latter, half-turning round; then addressing Pique-Vinaigre, "Now fire away! we listen."

A profound silence reigned in the sitting-room.

CHAPTER X.

GRINGALET AND CUT-IN-HALF.

BEFORE we commence to recital of Pique-Vinaigre, we will recall to our readers that, by a strange contrast, the majority of the prisoners, notwithstanding their cynical perversity, almost always preferred artless stories (we will not say puerile), in which the oppressed, by the laws of an inexorable fatality, is revenged on his tyrant, after trials and difficulties without number.

The thought is far from us, to establish the slightest parallel between corrupted beings and the honest and poor masses; but is it not known with what frensied applause the audience of minor theatres behold the deliverance of the victim, and with what curses they pursue the traitorous and the wicked?

One ordinarily laughs at these rough evidences of sympathy for that which is good, weak, and persecuted; of aversion for that which is powerful, unjust, and cruel.

It seems to us that to laugh at this is wrong.

Nothing is more consoling than these feelings innately of the multitude.

It is not evident that these salutary instincts may become fixed principles in those unfortunate beings whom ignorance and poverty expose to the subversive attacks of evil? Why not have every hope of a people whose good moral sense is so invariably manifested? of a people who, in spite of the fascinations of art, will never permit a dramatic work to arrive at its denouement by the triumph of the wicked and the punishment of the just?

This fact, scorned and laughed at though it be, appears to us of considerable importance on

account of the tendencies which it proves, and which are even often found (we repeat it) among beings the most corrupt, when they are, so to speak, in repose, and sheltered from criminal temptations or necessities. In a word, since men hardened in crime, still sometimes sympathise with the recital and expression of elevated sentiments, ought we not to believe that all men have more or less in them of the good, the well doing, the just; but that poverty and ignorance, in falsifying, in stifling these Divine instincts, are the first causes of human depravity?

Is it not evident that generally one does not become wicked except through misfortune, and that to snatch man from the terrible temptations of want by the equitable melioration of his material condition, is to make him capable of the virtues of which he is conscious?

The impression caused by the story of Pique-Vinaigre will demonstrate, or rather display, we hope, some of the ideas we have just set forth. Pique-Vinaigre then commenced his story in these terms, in the midst of the profound silence of his audience:

"It is not very long since the events occurred which I am going to relate to this honourable society. Little Poland was not then destroyed. Does the honourable society know what was called Little Poland?"

"I remember," said the prisoner in the blue cap and gray blouse, "it was some small houses near the Rue du Rocher, and the Rue de la Pepiniere."

"Exactly, pal," replied Vinaigre; "the city streets, which, however, are not full of palaces, would be lovely alongside of Little Poland, but, otherwise, a famous resort for our lot; there were no streets, but lanes; no houses, but hovels; no pavement, but a carpet of mud, so that the noise of carriages would not have incommoded you if any passed; but none passed. From morning to night, and, above all, from night to morning, what one did not cease to hear, were cries, of '*watch!*' '*help!*' '*murder!*' but the watch did not disturb himself. The more with their brains dashed out in Little Poland—so many the less to be arrested!

"The swarming population therein, you should have seen; very few jewellers, goldsmiths, or bankers lodged there! but, to make amends, there were heaps of organ-players, rope-dancers, Punch-and-Judy-men, or keepers of curious beasts. Among the latter, was one named Cut-'em-in-half, so cruel was he; above all, cruel towards children. They called him so, because, with a hatchet, he had cut in two a little Savoyard!"

At this part of the story the prison clock struck a quarter past three.

The prisoners entering their sleeping apartments at four o'clock, the crime was to be consummated before that hour.

"Thousand thunders! the keeper does not go," whispered the Skeleton to the Big Cripple.

"Be quiet; once the story started, he will leave." Pique-Vinaigre continued his recital.

"No one knew whence Cut-in-half came; some said he was an Italian, others a gipsy, others a Turk, others an African; the old women called him a magician, although a magician in these days may appear fishy; as for me, I should be quite tempted to say the same as the old women. What makes this likely is, that he always had with him a great red ape called Gargousse, which was so cunning and wicked, that one would have said he had Old Nick in him. By-and-by I shall speak again of Gargousse. As to Cut-'em-in-half, I am going to show him up: he had skin the colour of a bootlining, hair as red as the hide of his ape, green eyes, and what makes me think with the old women that he was a magician, is, that he had a black tongue."

"Black tongue?" said Barbillon.

"Black as ink!" answered Pique-Vinaigre.

"And how is that?"

"Because before he was born, his mother had probably spoken of a negro," answered Pique Vinaigre, with modest assurance. "To this ornament, Cut-in-half joined the trade of having I do not know how many tortoises, apes, guinea-pigs, white mice, foxes and marmots, with an equal number of little Savoyards.

"Every morning, the padrone distributed to each one his beast and a piece of black bread, and started them off, to beg for a sou or dance a Catalina. Those who, at night, brought back less than fifteen sous, were beaten, oh! how they were beaten! so that they were heard to cry from one end of Little Poland to the other.

"I must tell you also that there was in Little Poland, a man who was called the Alderman, because he was the longest resident of this quarter, and also the mayor, justice of the peace, or rather, of war, for it was in his court (he was a wine dealer) that they went to comb one another's heads, when there was no other way to settle their disputes. Although quite old, the Alderman was strong as a Hercules, and very much feared; they swore only by him in Little Poland: when he said 'it is good,' every one said 'it is very good;' when he said 'it is bad,' every one said 'it is awful bad;' he was a good man at bottom, but terrible; when, for example, strong people caused misery to the weaker, then, stand from under!

"As the Alderman was the neighbour of Cut-in-half, he had in the commencement heard the children cry, on account of the blows which the owner of the beasts gave them; so he said to him, 'If I hear the kids squeal again, I'll make you cry in your turn, and, as you have a stronger voice, I'll strike harder.'"

"Comic of the Alderman! I quite tumble to the old boy," said the prisoner in a blue cap.

"And so do I," added the keeper, approaching the group. Skeleton could not restrain a movement of angry impatience.

Pique Vinaigre continued:

"Thanks to the Alderman threatening Cut-in-half, the children were no more heard to cry at night; but the poor little unfortunates did not suffer the less, for if they did not cry when their master beat them, it was because they feared to be beaten still more. As for going and complaining to the Alderman, they never had such an idea. For the fifteen sous which each of the little boys was obliged to bring him, Cut-in-half fed them, lodged them, and clothed them.

"At night, a piece of black bread, the same for breakfast—that was the way he fed them; he never gave them any clothes—that was the way he clothed them; and he shut them up at night pell mell with their beasts, on the same straw, in a garret to which they clambered by a ladder and through a trap-door—and that was the way he lodged them. Once the beasts and children were all housed, he took away the the ladder and locked the trap door with a key.

"You may imagine the noise and uproar which these apes, guinea pigs, foxes, mice, tortoises, marmosets, and children made, without any light, in this garret, which was as large as a thimble. Cut-in-half slept in a room underneath, having his large ape Gargousse tied to the foot of the bed. When the noise was too loud in the garret, the owner of the beasts arose, took a large whip, mounted the ladder without a light, opened the trap, and lashed away at random.

"As he always had about a dozen boys, and some of the innocents brought sometimes as much as twenty sous a day, Cut-in-half, his expenses paid, and they were not heavy, had for himself about four or five francs each day; with that he frolicked, for note well that he was the greatest drinker on the earth, and was regularly dead drunk once every day. It was his rule, he said; except for that he would have a headache all day long; it must be said, also, that from his gains he bought sheep's hearts for Gargousse, the big ape eating raw meat like a very cannibal.

"But I see that the honourable assembly asks for Gringalet (Walking Rushlight); here he is, gents!"

"Ay! let us see Gringalet, and then I'll go and eat my soup," said the keeper.

Skeleton exchanged a look of ferocious satisfaction with Cripple.

"Among the children to whom Cut-in-half distributed his beasts," resumed Pique Vinaigre, "there was a poor little devil nicknamed Gringalet. Without father or mother, without sister or brother, without a home, he found himself alone—all alone in the world, where he never asked to come, and whence he could have gone, without anybody caring at all about it. He was not called Gringalet in mere sport; he was dwarfish, and puny, and needy; no one would have given him over seven or eight years, yet he was thirteen; but if he did not look more than half his age, it was not his fault, for he had not on the average eaten more than every other day, and then so little, and so bad, that he really did very well to appear to be seven.

"Poor babby, I think I see him," said the prisoner in the blue cap; "there are so many like him on the streets of Paris, little starved-to-deaths."

"They ought to begin to learn that trade young," replied Pique Vinaigre, bitterly; "so that they can become used to it."

"Come, go on then, make haste," said Skeleton, gruffly; "the keeper is impatient, his soup is growing cold."

"Oh, bah! never mind," answered the keeper; "I wish to make a little more acquaintance with Gringalet; It is amusing."

"Really, it is very interesting," added Germain, attentive to the story.

"Oh, thank you, for what you say, my capitalist; that gives me more pleasure than your ten sous."

"Thunder! you sluggard!" cried the Skeleton, "will you have done keeping us waiting?"

"Here goes!" answersd Pique Vinaigre

"One day, Cut-in-half had picked up Gringalet in the street, dying with cold and hunger; he would have done just as well to let him alone to die. As Gringalet was feeble, he was afraid; and as he was cowardly, he became the laughing-stock and scapegoat of his companions, who beat him, and caused him so much misery, that he would have been very wicked, if strength and courage had not failed him.

"But no: when they beat him, he cried saying, 'I have done no harm to any one, yet every one harms me—it is unjust. Oh! if I were strong, and bold!' You think, perhaps, that Gringalet was going to add, 'I would return to others the evil they did me.' Well, no! not at all: he said, 'Oh! if I were strong and bold, I would defend the weak against the strong; for I am weak, and the strong make me suffer.'

"In the mean time, as he was too much of a pigmy to prevent the strong from molesting the weak, he prevented the larger beasts from injuring the smaller ones."

"There's a funny idea!" said the prisoner in the blue cap.

"And what is still more funny," replied the patterer, "is, that, with this idea, one would have said, that Gringalet consoled himself for being beaten; and that proves that, at bottom, he had not a bad heart."

"I think so, — on the contrary," said the keeper. "Pique Vinaigre, is jolly amusing?"

At this moment, the clock struck half past three.

The Skeleton and Big Cripple exchanged significant glances.

The hour advanced, the keeper did not retire, and some of the least hardened prisoners seemed almost to forget the sinister projects against Germain, who listened with eagerness to the recital.

"When I say," Pique Vinaigre resumed, "that Gringalet prevented the larger beasts from eating the smaller ones, you will please understand, that Gringalet did not go and interfere in the affairs of the tigers, lions, wolves, or even the foxes and apes of the menagerie, he was too cowardly for that; but as soon as he saw, for example, a spider concealed in his web, to catch a poor foolish fly that was buzzing about gaily in the sun, without harming any one, crack! Gringalet gave a sweep into the web, delivered the fly, and crushed the spider, like a real Cæsar! Yes! like a real Cæsar! for he became as white as chalk at even touching these villianous creatures; he needed, then, resolution: he was afraid of a lady-bug, and had taken a very long time to become familiar with the turtle which Cut-in-half handed over to him every morning. Thus, Gringalet, overcoming the alarm which spiders caused him, to prevent the flies from being eaten, showed himself—"

"Showed himself as bold, in his way, as a man who would have attacked a wolf, to take from him a lamb of the fold," said Blue Cap.

"Or as a man who would have attacked Cut-in-half, to drag Gringalet from his claws," added Barbillon, also much interested.

"As you say," replied Pique-Vinaigre. "Accordingly, after these doings, Gringalet did not feel so very unfortunate. He who never laughed, smiled, looked wise, put on his cap sideways (when he had a cap), and sang the Marseillaise with a trumpet air. At such times, there was not a spider that dared to look him in the face!

"Another time it was a cricket that was drowning and struggling in a gutter; quickly Gringalet bravely plunged two of his fingers into the waves and caught the cricket, which he afterward placed on a blade of grass: a champion swimmer with a medal, who should have fished up his tenth drowned person, at fifty francs the head, could not have been more proud than Gringalet, when he saw his cricket kick and run away.

"And yet the cricket gave him neither money, nor a medal, and did not even say thank you, nor did the fly. 'But then, Pique-Vinaigre, my friend,' will the honourable society say, 'What kind of pleasure Gringalet, whom every one beats, could find in being the deliverer of crickets and the executioner of spiders? Since others injured him, why did he not revenge himself in doing harm according to his strength; for instance, by causing the flies to be eaten by spiders, or in letting the crickets drown themselves; or even drowning them himself.'"

"Yes, exactly: why did he not revenge himself in that way?" said Nicholas.

"What good would that have done him?" said another.

"Why, to do harm, because others harmed him!"

"No! I can comprehend why the poor little kid liked to save the flies," answered Blue Cap. "He thought, perhaps, 'who knows that some one will not save me in the same way?'"

"Pal, you're right," cried Pique-Vinaigre; "you have read in your heart what I was about to explain to the honourable company.

"Gringalet was not malicious; he saw no farther than the end of his nose; but he said to himself, Cut-in-half is my spider; perhaps one day somebody will do for me what I do for the flies; they will break up his web, and snatch me from his claws. For until then, on no account would he have dared to run away from his master; he would have thought himself stone dead. Yet, one day, when neither he nor his turtle had had any luck, and they had only earned two or three sous, Cut-in-half began to whip the child so hard, so hard! that, hang it! Gringalet could stand it no longer. Tired of being the butt and martyr of everybody, he watched the moment when the trap-door of the garret was open, and while the padrone was feeding his beasts, he slipped down the ladder."

"Hooray! so much the better!" said a prisoner.

"But why did he not go and complain to the Alderman?" said Blue Cap; "he would have given Cut-in-half his token!"

"Yes, but he did not dare; he was too much afraid, he preferred to run away. Unfortunately, Cut-in-half had seen him; he caught him by the throat, and carried him back to the garret; this time, Gringalet, thinking of what he had to expect, shuddered from head to foot, for he was not at the end of his troubles.

"Speaking of the troubles of Gringalet, it is necessary that I should tell you of Gargousse, the favourite ape. This wicked animal was larger than Gringalet: judge what a size for an ape! Now I am going to tell you why they did not lead him as a show through the streets, like the other beasts of the menagerie; it was because Gargousse, was so wicked and so strong that, among all the children, there was only one Auvergnat, fourteen years old, a resolute fellow, who, after having several times collared and fought with Gargousse, had succeeded in mastering him, and leading him by a chain; and even then, there were often battles between them, and bloody ones too, you may bet!

"Tired of this, the little Auvergnat said one day, 'Well, well, I will revenge myself on you, you lubberly baboon!' So one morning he set off with his beast, as usual; to decoy him, he bought a sheep's heart: while Gargousse was eating, he passed a cord through the end of his chain, and fastened it to a tree, and when he had the scoundrel of an ape once tied fast, he poured on him such a torrent of blows! a torrent that fire could not have extinguished."

"Good boy!"

"Bravo! Auvergnat!"

"Hit him again, he's got no friends!"

"Break his back for him, the rascally Gargousse," said the prisoners.

"And he did lay it on with a good heart," answered Pique-Vinaigre. "You should have

heard how Gargousse yelled, seen how he gnashed his teeth, jumped, danced here and there ; but Auvergnat trimmed him up with his club, saying, 'Do you like it? then here is some more!' Unfortunately, apes are like cats, they have nine lives. Gargousse was as cunning as he was wicked. When he saw, as I may say, what kind of wood was burning for him, at the very thickest moment of the torrents, he cut a last caper, fell flat down at the foot of the tree, kicked a moment, and then shammed dead, not budging any more than a log. The Auvergnat wished nothing more: believing the ape done for, he cleared out, never to put his feet in Cut-in-half's drum again. But the vagabond Gargousse watched him out of the corner of his eye, all wounded as he was, and as soon as he saw himself alone, and Auvergnat at a distance, he gnawed the cord with his teeth. The Boulevard Monceau, where he had had his dance, was very near Little Poland; the ape knew the road as well as he did his prayers ; he slowly went off then, crawling along, and arrived at his master's, who swore and foamed to see his pet ape thus served out. But this is not all ; from that moment Gargousse had preserved such furious spite against all children in general, that Cut-in-half though not very tender-hearted, had not dared to let any of them lead him out, for fear of an accident ; for Gargousse would have been capable of strangling or devouring a child ; and the little fellows would rather have allowed themselves to be slashed by their master, than approach the ape."

"I must most decidedly go and eat my soup," said the keeper, making a movement towards the door ; "Pique-Vinaigre would make the birds come down from the trees to hear him. I do not know wherever he has fished up this story."

"At length the keeper is off," whispered Skeleton to the Cripple ; "I am in a fever, so much do I burn. Only attend to making the ring around the spy, I'll take care of the rest."

"Be good boys," said the keeper, going towards the door.

"Good as pictures," answered Skeleton, drawing near Germain, while the Big Cripple and Nicholas, at a concerted signal, made two steps in the same direction.

"Oh ! respectable warder you are going away at the finest moment," said Pique-Vinaigre, with an air of reproach.

Except for the Cripple, who prevented his movement by seizing his arm, Skeleton would have sprung upon Pique-Vinaigre.

"How at the finest moment?" answered the keeper, turning.

"I think so," said Pique-Vinaigre ; "you do not know all you are going to lose ; the most charming part of my story is about to commence."

"Do not listen to it, then," said Skeleton, with difficulty restraining his rage ; "he is not in the vein to-day : I find his story abominably stupid.

"My story stupid?" cried Pique-Viniagre, his vanity wounded ; "well, keeper, I beg you, I supplicate you, to remain to the end. I have only enough to fill a good quarter of an hour ; besides your soup is cold. Now what do you risk ? I will hasten on with my story, so that you may still have the time to go and eat before we go to our beds."

"Well, then, I remain, but make haste," said the keeper, drawing near.

"And you are right to remain, for, without boasting, you have never heard anything like it—above all, the conclusion ; there is the triumph of the ape and of Gringalet, escorted by all the little beast-conductors and inhabitants of Little Poland. My word of honour I do not say it from vanity, but it is first class."

"Then go on, my boy," said the keeper, coming close to the stove.

The Skeleton trembled with rage. He almost despaired of accomplishing his crime. Once the hour of repose arrived, Germain was saved ; for he did not sleep in the same ward with his implacable euemy, and the next day, as we have said, he was to occupy one of the vacant cells.

And moreover, Skeleton saw from the interruptions of several of the prisoners, that they found themselves, thanks to the story of Pique-Vinaigre, filled with ideas that softened their hearts ; perhaps, then, they would not assist, with savage indifference, the accomplishment of a frightful murder, of which their presence would make them accomplices.

He could prevent the patterer from finishing his story, but then his last hope vanished of seeing the keeper retire before the hour in which Germain would be in safety.

"Oh ! stupid, is it?" said Pique-Vinaigre. "Well ! the honourable society shall be the judge.

"There was not then an animal more wicked than the large ape Gargousse, which was, above all, as savage as his master towards children. What did Cut-in-half do to punish Gringalet for wishing to run away ? That you shall know directly ; in the mean time, he caught the child, shut him up in the garret, saying to him, 'To-morrow morning, when all your comrades are gone, I will take hold of you, and you shall see what I do to those who wish to run away from here.'

"I leave you to imagine what a horrible night Gringalet passed. He hardly closed his eyes ; he wondered what Cut-in-half would do. At length he fell asleep. But what a sleep ! then there was a dream, a frightful dream—that is to say, the beginning—you will see.

"He dreamed that he was one of those poor flies which he had so often saved from the spider's web, and that he, in his turn, fell into a large and strong web, where he struggled with all his strength without being able to escape ; then he saw coming towards him, softly, cautiously, a kind of monster, which had the face of his master, on a spider's body.

"My poor Gringalet began again to struggle,

as you may imagine ; but the more efforts he made the more he was entangled in the toils, just like the poor flies. At length the spider approached—touched him—and he felt the large, cold, and hairy paws of the monster encircle him. He thought himself dead; but suddenly he heard a kind of humming noise, clear and acute, and saw a little golden gnat which had a kind of sting as fine and brilliant as a diamond needle, flying round the spider in a furious manner, and a voice (when I say voice, just imagine the voice of a gnat!) a voice said to him, 'Poor little fly; you have saved flies ; the spider shall not—'

"Unfortunately, Gringalet awoke with a start, and he saw not the end of the dream ; nevertheless, he was a little comforted, saying to himself, 'Perhaps the golden gnat with the diamond sting would have killed the spider, if I had seen the end of the dream.'

"But Gringalet had need of all this to console himself, for as the night advanced his fear returned so strongly that in the end he forgot his dream, or, rather, he only remembered the frightful part of it ; the great web where he had been entangled, and the spider with the padrone's face. You can judge what shiverings of alarm he must have had. Bless me ! judge then, alone—all alone—with no one to take his part !

"In the morning, when he saw the light appear little by little through the garret window, his alarm redoubled ; the moment was drawing near when he would be left all alone with Cut-in-half. Then he threw himself on his knees in the middle of the garret, and weeping hot tears, he begged his companions to ask his pardon from Cut-in-half; or to assist him to escape, if there was any way. Oh, yes ! some from fear of the master, others from caring nothing about it, others from cruelty, refused the service which poor Gringalet demanded.

"Wicked scrubs," said the prisoner in the blue cap ; "they had neither body nor soul !"

"It is true," said another ; "it is vexing to see this want of feeling."

"And alone, and without defence," resumed Blue Cap ; "for one who cannot stretch out his neck without wincing it is always a pity. When one has teeth to bite, then it is different. You have tusks? Well, show them, and look for tail, my cadet !"

"That is true !" said several of the prisoners.

"Come !" cried Skeleton, no longer able to restrain his rage, and addressing Blue Cap, "will you shut up? have I not already said, 'Silence in the band?' Am I, or am I not, the ruler here ?"

For sole answer, Blue Cap looked him in the face, and then made a gesture, perfectly well known to street Arabs, which consists in placing on the tip of the nose the thumb of the right hand, opened, and touching with the little finger the thumb of the left, also spread out like a fan.

Blue Cap accompanied this mute answer with an expression so grotesque that several of the prisoners shouted with laughter, while some of the others, on the contrary, remained stupified at the audacity of the new prisoner.

Skeleton shook his fist at Blue Cap, and said, grinding his teeth, "We'll settle this to-morrow."

"And I will make the addition on your hide. I'll set down seventeen and carry naught."

For fear the keeper should find a new reason for remaining in order to prevent a possible quarrel, Skeleton answered calmly,

"That is not the question. I have the ruling of the hall, and I must be obeyed ; is it not so, keeper?"

"It is true," said the officer. "Do not interrupt. And you, Pique-Vinaigre, go on ; but make haste, my boy."

"Then," resumed Pique-Vinaigre, continuing his story, "Gringalet, seeing himself abandoned, gave himself up to his unhappy fate. Broad daylight came, and all the children prepared to depart with their beasts. Cut-in-half opened the trap and called the roll, in order to give each one his piece of bread ; all descended the ladder, and Gringalet, more dead than alive, crouching in a corner of the garret, moved no more than it did ; he saw his companions going off, one after the other ; he would have given anything to do as they did. Finally, they were all gone. The heart of the poor child beat strongly ; he hoped that, perhaps, his master would forget him. Ah, well, he heard Cut-in-half at the foot of the ladder, cry in a harsh voice,

"'Gringalet ! Gringalet !'

"'Here I am, master.'

"'Come down at once, or I'll fetch you,' answered Cut in Half. Gringalet thought his last day was come.

"'I must,' he said to himself, trembling in every limb, and remembering his dream, 'now you *are* in for it, little fly ; the spider is going to eat you.'

"After having placed his turtle softly on the ground, he bade him good-bye, for he had become attached to the creatnre, and approached the trap-door. He placed his foot on the ladder to descend, when Cut-in-half taking him by his poor little leg, as slender as a spindle, drew him so strongly, so harshly, that Gringalet tumbled down, and polished his face against the whole length of the ladder."

"What a pity that the Alderman had not been there—what a fine dance for Cut-in-half," said Blue Cap ; "it is in such times as these that it is good to be strong."

"Yes, my son ; but, unfortunately the Alderman was not there ! Cut-in-half took the child by the seat of his trousers, and carried him into his den, where he kept his big ape tied to the foot of his bed. On seeing the child, the beast began to leap and grind his teeth like a mad thing, and to spring the whole length of his chain, as if he wished to devour him."

"Poor Gringalet, how did he ever get out of this?"

"Why, if he had fallen into the clutches of the ape, he would have been strangled at once."

"Thunder! it makes me half dead," said Blue Cap: "as for me, at this moment, I could not harm a mouse—what do you say, mate?"

"Nor I either." "Nor I."

At this moment the clock struck three quarters past three.

Skeleton fearing more and more that time would be wanting, cried, furious at these interruptions, which seemed to indicate that several of the prisoners were becoming softened "Silence in the crowd! He will never finish, if you jabber as much as he does."

Pique-Vinaigre continued:

"When one reflects that Gringalet had had all the trouble in the world to become accustomed to his turtle, and that the most courageous of his comrades trembled at the name alone of Gargousse, let him imagine his terror when he saw himself carried by his master near to this fiend of an ape. 'Pardon, master,' he cried, his teeth chattering as if he had an ague,—'pardon, master! I will never do it again, I promise you.'

"The poor little fellow cried, 'I will never do it again,' without knowing why he said so, for he had nothing to reproach himself with; but Cut-in-half laughed at that. In spite of the cries of the child, who struggled hard, he placed him within reach of Gargousse, and the beast sprang upon him and clutched him!"

A shudder passed through the audience, who were more and more attentive.

"How stupid I should have been to go away, said the keeper, approaching still nearer.

"And this is nothing yet; the finest has to come," answered Pique-Vinaigre. "As soon as Gringalet felt the cold and hairy paws of the great ape, which seized him by the throat and by the head, he thought himself devoured, became as it were off his nut, and began to cry with groans which would have softened a tiger,

"'The spider of my dream, good Lord! the spider of my dream—little golden gnat, help, help!'

"'Will you hush? will you hush?' said Cut-in-half giving him heavy kicks, for he was afraid that his cries would be heard; but at the end of a moment there was no more danger: poor Gringalet cried no more, struggled no more; on his knees, as white as a sheet, he shut his eyes and shivered as if it had been January. Meantime the ape beat him, pulled his hair, and scratched him; and from time to time, the wicked beast stopped to look at his master, absolutely as if they understood each other. As for Cut-in-half he laughed so loud! that if Gringalet had cried, the shouts of his master would have drowned his cries. It would seem as if this encouraged Gargousse, for he was more and more cruel to the child."

"Oh! you sanguinary ape," cried Blue Cap. "If I had hold of you by the tail, I would spin you round like a mill—just like a sling, and I would crack your conk on the pavement."

"Rascally ape! he was as wicked as a man?"

"There are no men so wicked as that!"

"Not so wicked?" answered Pidue-Vinaigre. "You forgot old Cut-in-half! Judge of it—this is what he did afterward: he unfastened the chain (which was very long) from the bed, took the child, more dead than alive, from the paws of Gargousse, and fastened him at one end of it, with Gargouse at the other. There was an idea!"

"It is true, there are men more cruel than the most cruel beasts."

"When Cut-in-half had done this, he said to his ape, which appeared to understand him,

"'Attention, Gargousse! they have led and shown you, now in your turn you shall show Gringalet; he shall be your ape. Come, hop, stand up, Gringalet, or I say to Gargousse, "speak to him, fellow!"'

"The poor child had fallen on his knees, his hands clasped, but not able to speak; his teeth chattered in his head.

"'There! make him walk, Gargousse,' said Cut-in-half to his ape; 'and if he is sulky, do as I do.'

"And at the same time he gave the child a torrent of blows with a switch, and afterward handed it to the ape.

"You know how these animals imitate by nature, but Gargousse in this respect excelled; so he took the rod in his hand and fell upon Gringalet, who was obliged to get up. Once on his legs, he was about the same size as the ape; then Cut-in-half went out of his room and descended the staircase, calling Gargousse, and Gargousse followed him, driving Gringalet before him with blows from the rod.

"They reached thus the little court of the building. There Cut-in-half counted on amusing himself; he shut the door leading into the lane, and signed to Gargousse to make the child run before him around the court, by striking him with the switch.

"The ape obeyed, and began to chase Gringalet in this manner, while Cut-in-half held his sides with laughter. You think that this wickedness was enough? Oh! yes, but it was nothing as yet. Up to this time Gringalet would have escaped with a few scratches, lashes, and horrible fear. Now this is what Cut-in half did:

"To make the ape furious against the child, who, panting and out of breath, was more dead than alive, he took Gringalet by the hair, pretended to belabour him with blows, and then he handed him back to Gargousse, crying, 'Speak to him, speak to him!' and then he showed him a piece of sheep's heart, as much as to say to him, 'This shall be your reward!'

"Oh! then my friends, truly it was dreadful sight. Imagine a great red ape with a black snout, grinding his teeth like a madman, and throwing himself furiously on this poor little unfortunate, who, not being able to defend himself, had been thrown down at the first blow, and lay with his face to the ground, in order to protect it.

"Seeing this, Gargousse, his master setting him at the child continually, mounted on his

back, took him by the neck, and fell to biting him, until he made the blood come.

"'Oh! the spider of my dream—the spider!' cried Gringalet in a stifled voice, believing now that he was going to be killed. Suddenly there was a knock at the door!"

"Ah! the Alderman!" cried the prisoners with joy.

"Yes, this time it was he, my friends; he called through the door, 'Will you open Cut-in-half? will you open? Do not sham deaf; for I see you through the keyhole!'

"Cut-in-half, forced to reply, went grumbling to open the door for the Alderman, who was a rough, as solid as a bridge, in spite of his fifty years, and with whom it was worth no one's while to joke when he was angry.

"'What do you want with me?' said Cut-in-Half to him, half opening the door.

"'I want to speak to you,' said the Alderman who entered almost by force into the little yard; then, seeing the ape still savage after Gringalet, he ran, caught Gargousse by the nape of his neck, and tried to take the child away from under him; but he only then saw that the child was chained to the ape. Seeing this, he looked at Cut-in-half in a terrible manner, and cried, 'Come, then, at once, and unchain this poor boy!'

"You can judge of the joy and surprise of Gringalet, who, half dead with fright, found himself saved as it were by a miracle. Then he could not but think of the golden gnat of his dream, although the Alderman did not look much like a gnat, the big buffer."

"Ah," said the keeper, making a step towards the door; "now Gringalet is saved, I'll go to eat my soup."

"Saved?" cried Pique-Vinaigre, "oh! yes, saved! but not yet at the end of his troubles, poor Gringalet.'

"Really?" said several of the prisoners, with interest. "But what is going to happen to him now?' asked the keeper, drawing near.

"Remain, and you shall know," answered the patterer.

"Cunning Pique-Vinaigre, he does with one just as he pleases," said the keeper; "I will remain a little longer."

Skeleton, mute, foamed with rage,

Pique-Vinaigre continued:

"Cut-in-half who feared the alderman, as he did fire, had grumblingly loosened the child from the chain; when that was done, the alderman threw Gargousse into the air, received him on the end of a most magnificent kick, and sent him sprawling ten feet off. The ape cried like a burned child, gnashed his teeth, but fled quickly, and went to take refuge on the top of a shed, where he shook his fist at the alderman.

"'Why do you beat my ape?' said Cut-in-half to the alderman.

"'You ought rather to ask me, why I do not beat you, to cause this child such suffering! You are drunk pretty early this morning?'

"'I am no more drunk than you are; I was teaching a trick to my ape; I wish to give a representation where he and Gringalet will appear together; I am following my business—why do you meddle with it?'

"'I meddle with what concerns me. This morning, not seeing Gringalet pass before my door with the other children, I asked them where he was; they did not answer—they looked embarrassed. I know you. I thought you were after no good, and I was not wrong. Listen to me: every time I do not see Gringalet pass before my door with the others in the morning, I will be here at once, and you must show him to me, or—I'll knock you down.'

"'I will do as I please; I have no orders to receive from you,' answered Cut-in-half, riled at this threat. 'You shall not knock me down; and if you do not take yourself off from this, or if you return, I—'

"Flip-flap! went the alderman, interrupting Cut-in-half by a duet of blows enough to silence a rhinoceros: 'There is what you get for answering in this manner to the alderman of Little Poland."

"Two blows! it was too little," said Blue Cap; "in his place, I should have given him a bigger dose."

"And he should not have had it too hastily," added a prisoner.

"The alderman," replied Pique-Vinaigre, "could have eaten ten like Cut-in-half. So he was obliged to put these blows in his pocket; but he was none the less furious at being struck, and above all, before Gringalet. So, at this very moment, he promised to avenge himself, and an idea occurred to him which could only have occurred to a demon of wickedness like himself. While he was ruminating on this diabolical idea, the alderman said,

"'Remember, that if you attempt to injure this child again, I will force you to clear out from Little Poland, you and your beasts: otherwise I will stir up the neighbourhood against you; you know they hate you here, so you will have a passport which your back will remember, I promise you.'

"Traitor as he was, in order to be able to execute his wicked idea, instead of continuing to be angry against the alderman, Cut-in-half cringed like a dog, and said,

"'Faith of a man! you were wrong to strike me, alderman, and to think that I wished any harm to Gringalet; on the contrary, I repeat to you, that I was teaching a new trick to my ape; he is not sweet-tempered when he is angry, and if, in the scuffle, the little one was bitten, I am sorry for it.'

"'Hum!' said the alderman, looking at him out of the corner of his eye, 'is this really true what you tell me? If you wish to teach a trick to your ape, why did you fasten him to Gringalet?'

"'Because Gringalet must also know it. This is what I wish to do: I will dress Gargousse in a red coat and a cap with feathers; I will seat Gringalet in a child's chair; then I will put a towel around his neck, and the ape, with a large wooden razor, will pretend to shave him.'

"The alderman could not keep from laughing at this idea.

"'Is it not comic?' said Cut-in-half, with a smirking look.

"'In truth, it is,' said the alderman, 'so much the more, as they say your ape is sufficiently cunning and knowing to play such a part.'

"'I think so. When he has seen me five or six times pretend to shvae Gringalet, he will imitate me with his large wooden razor; but on that account, as the child must become used to him, I have tied them together.'

"'But why have you chosen Gringalet rather than any other?'

"'Because he is the smallest of all, and, being seated, Gargousse will be larger than he is; besides, I intended to give half of the profits to Gringalet.'

"'If this is so,' said the alderman, reassured by the hypocrisy of the owner of the beasts, 'I regret the dose I gave you; consider it as an advance against the next time you do wrong."

"While his master spoke with the alderman, Gringalet dared not breathe; he trembled like a leaf, and longed to throw himself at the alderman's feet, and beg to be taken away; but his courage failed him and he began again to despair, saying to himself, 'I shall be like the poor fly of my dream—the spider will devour me; I was wrong to believe that the golden gnat would save me!'

"Look here, my boy; since Daddy Cut-em-in-half gives you half of the money, that ought to encourage you to accustom yourself to the ape. Bah! bah! you will do it; and if the profits are large, you will have no cause to complain.'

"'He complain! Have you any reason to complain?' asked his master, giving him a side look so terrible that the child wished he was a hundred feet under ground.

"'No, no, master!' he stammered.

"'You see, alderman,' said Cut-in-half, 'he never has complained; I only wish for his welfare, after all. If Gargousse scratched him the first time, it shall not happen again, I promise you. I will watch.'

"'Very well! Thus every one will be content.'

"'Gringalet the most,' said Cut-in-half; 'is it not so?'

"'Yes, yes, master,' said the trembling child.

"'And to console you for your scratches, I will give you part of a good breakfast; for the alderman is going to send a plate of cutlets and pickles, four bottles of wine, and a gallon of brandy.'

"'At your service, Cut-in-half, my cellar and my kitchen are open for the whole world.'

"At heart, the alderman was a good man, but he was not very wise, and he liked to sell his wine, and cutlets also. The rascal knew it well; you see that he sent him off contented at having sold some eatables and drinkables, and reassured as to the fate of Gringalet.

"So, now, here is the poor little fellow fallen again into the power of his master. The moment the alderman had turned on his heels, Cut-in-half showed the staircase to his victim, and ordered him to mount at once to his garret; the child did not allow him to say it twice, but went, very much alarmed.

"'Oh, Lord! I am lost,' he cried throwing himself upon the straw beside his turtle, and weeping bitterly. He was there for a good hour, sobbing, when he heard Cut-in-half's coarse voice calling him. What increased the fear of Gringalet was, that it seemed to him the voice of his master had a strange sound.

"'Will you come down at once?' said the owner of the beast, with a horrid oath.

"The child quickly descended the stairs. Hardly had he put his foot on the ground, when his master seized him, and carried him to his chamber, staggering at each step, for Cut-in-half had drunk so much that he was as tipsy as a sow, and could hardly keep his legs; his body swayed backward and forward, and he looked at Gringalet, rolling his eyes in a most ferocious manner, but without speaking. He had, too thick a tongue. Never had the child been more afraid of him.

"Gargousse was chained to the foot of the bed.

"In the middle of the room was a chair with a cord hanging on the back.

"'Si—(hic!)—sit down there,"' continued Pique-Vinaigre, imitating, to the end of his story, the stammering of a drunken man, whenever he related what Cut-in-half said.

"Gringalet seated himself trembling. Then Cut-in-half without saying a word, wound the cord around him, and tied him to the chair, and that not easily; for although the owner of the beasts could still see a little, and knew what he was about, you may imagine he made granny's knots. At length, Gringalet is firmly fastened in the chair. 'Oh, dear! he murmured. 'This time no one will come to deliver me.'

"Poor little fellow, he was right; no one could—no one did come, as you will see. The alderman had gone, and Cut-in-half had double locked the door of the court on the inside, and drawn the bolt: no one could come there to the aid of Gringalet."

"Oh! this time," said several of the prisoners, much interested in the story, "Gringalet, you are lost." "Poor little fellow!" "What a pity!" "If twenty sous would save him, I would give them." "I also." "Rascal of a Cut-in-half! Whatever is he going to do?"

Pique-Vinaigre continued:

"When Gringalet was tied to the chair his master said to him, 'You young rascal,' it is you who have been the cause that—I have been beaten by the alderman—you—are—go-o-o-ing to die!' And he drew from his pocket a large razor, newly sharpened, opened it, and took with one hand Gringalet by the hair."

A murmur of indignation and horror circulated among the prisoners, and interrupted for a moment Pique-Vinaigre, who resumed:

"At sight of the razor the child began to cry, 'Pardon! master, pardon! do not kill me!' 'C-r-r-r-y, c-r-r-y, b-o-o-y—you will not (hic!) cry long,' answered Cut-in-half.

"'Golden gnat! golden gnat! help?' cried poor Gringalet, almost delirious, recalling to his mind his dream; 'here is the spider going to kill me!'

"'Ah! you call—me—a-a-a (hic!) spider!' said Cut-in-half; 'on account—o-of—that—and other things, you—are—go-o-o-ing to (hic!) die—do you hear-r-r—but—not by my (hic!) hand—because besides, they will guillotine me-e-e. I will say—and—prove—that it was—the—a-a-pe—I have prepared—but no matter!' said Cut-in-half hardly able to stand; then, calling his ape, which, at the end of his chain, ground his teeth, and looked alternately at his master and the child.

"'Look here, Gargousse," he said, showing him the razor and Gringalet, whom he held by the hair, 'you must do so to him; do you (hic!) see?'

"And passing the back of the razor several times over the throat of Gringalet, he pretended to cut it.

"The confounded ape was such a good imitator, so wicked, and so malicious, that he comprehended what his master wished; and, to prove it to him, shook his chain with the left paw, threw his head back, and pretended to cut his throat. 'That's it, Gargousse; that's it,' said Cut-in-half stammering, shutting his eyes, and reeling so much that he came near falling with Gringalet and the chair. 'Yes, that's it; I'll unfasten your chain—cut his whistle—that's it; hey, Gargousse?'

"The ape cried and chattered, as if to say yes, and put out his paw to take the razor, which was held towards him.

"'Golden gnat, help!' murmered Gringalet in a dying tone, certain now that his hour was come.

"For, alas! he called the golden gnat to his assistance, without any hope that he would come; but he said that as one says 'Oh, Lord!' when one is drowning.

"Just at this moment, Gringalet saw come in at the window one of those small flies, green and gold, which are so common; one would have called it a spark of fire which flew, and just at the moment Cut-in-half gave the razor to Gargousse, the golden gnat flew straight into the eye of the wicked wretch.

"A fly in the eye is no great thing; but, for a moment, it stings like a prick with a needle; so Cut-in-half who could hardly stand, fell on the floor and rolled like a log to the foot of the bed where Gargousse was chained.

"'Golden gnat, I thank you; you have saved me!' cried Gringalet; for, still seated, and tied on the chair, he had seen everything."

"It is true enough, the golden gnat prevented his throat from being cut," cried the prisoners, transported with joy.

"Hooray for the golden gnat!" cried Blue Cap.

"Yes, long live the golden gnat!" repeated several voices.

"Bravo, Pique-Vinaigre and his stories!" said another.

"Stop, then," resumed the patterer, "here's the finest and most terrible part of the story that I had promised you.

"Cut-in-Half had fallen on the ground like lead; he was so drunk that he stirred no more than a log; he was dead drunk, and knew nothing; but, in falling, he came near crushing Gargousse, and had almost broken one of his hind paws. You know how wicked this villainous beast was—rancorous and malicious. He held on to the razor which his master had given him to cut the throat of Gringalet. What does my lovely ape do when he sees his master stretched on his back, immovable as a fried carp, and much at his ease? He sprang upon him, crouched on his breast, with one of his paws stretched the skin of his throat, and with the other—click!—he cut his windpipe in a moment, exactly as Cut-in-Half had shown him how to operate on Gringalet."

"Bravo!"

"Well done!"

"Long live Gargousse!"

"The little golden gnat for ever!"

"Bravo, Gringalet!"

"Hooray, Gargousse!" cried the prisoners with enthusiasm.

"Well, my friends!" cried Pique-Vinaigre, enchanted at the success of his story; "what you have just cried, all Little Poland cried an hour later."

"How is that—how?"

"I told you that, to do this bloody deed quite at his ease, Cut-in-Half had locked his door on the inside. In the evening, the children returned, one after the other, with their beasts; the first knocked—no answer; at length, when they were all assembled, they knocked again—no reply; one of them went after the Alderman, and told him that they had knocked, and that their master did not open the door. 'The fellow is as drunk as a Dutchman,' said he. 'I sent him some wine just now; we must break open the door; the children cannot remain all night out of doors."

"They break open the doors, they enter, they mount the stairs, they reach the chamber, and what do they see? Gargousse, chained and crouching on the body of his master, and playing with the razor; poor Gringalet, happily out of his reach, still seated, and tied on the chair, not daring to cast his eyes on the dead body, and looking at—guess what! The little golden fly, which, after having fluttered around the child, as if to felicitate him, had finally come and seated itself on his little hand.

"Gringalet related all to the Alderman, and the crowd who followed him; this appeared truly, as they said, an act of Providence; then the Alderman said, 'A triumph to Gringalet; a triumph to Gargousse, who has killed this bad Cut-in-Half. He cut others; it was his turn to be cut!'

"'Yes, yes!' said the crowd, for the defunct was detested by everybody, 'a triumph for Gargousse! a triumph for Gringalet.'

"It was night; they lighted wisps of straw, they tied Gargousse on a bench, which four boys carried on their shoulders; the sweet pet of an ape did not appear to dislike this, and assumed the airs of a conquerer, showing his teeth to the crowd. After the ape came the Alderman, carrying Gringalet in his arms: all the little boys, each with his beast, surrounded the Alderman, one carried his fox, another his marmoset, another his guinea pig; those who played on the hurdygurdy, played on the hurdygurdy; there were chimneysweeps, with their bagpipes, who also played; it was an uproar of joy; which cannot be imagined! Behind the musicians came all the inhabitants of Little Poland, men, women, and children; they all held torches, and shouted like madmen, 'Hooray, Gringalet!' 'Gargousse for ever!" The cortege in this order marched round the house of Cut-in-half. It was a droll spectacle; the old buildings and all the figures illuminated by the red light of the straw fires, which flickered, and sparkled, and blazed up! As to Gringalet, the first thing he did, once at liberty, was to place the little golden fly in a paper box; and he kept repeating, during his triumph, 'Little golden gnats, I did well to hinder the spiders from eating you, for—'"

The recital of Pique-Vinaigre was interrupted.

"Roussel, ahoy!" cried a voice from without "come then, and eat your soup; four o'clock will strike in ten minutes."

"All right! the story is about finished. I'll go. Thank you, my boy, you have amused me finely; you may be proud of it," said the keeper to Pique-Vinaigre, going towards the door. Then stopping, "Be good boys!" he added, to the prisoners, turning around.

"We are going to hear the end of the story." said Skeleton, almost bursting with restrained rage. Then he whispered to the Big Cripple, 'Go to the door, look after the keeper, and when you have seen him go out of the court, cry 'Gargousse!" and the spy is dead."

"Just so," said the Cripple, who accompanied the keeper, and remained standing near the door watching him.

"I told you, then," said Pique-Vinaigre, "that Gringalet, all the time of his triumph, said to himself, 'Little gnats, I have—"

"Gargousse!" cried the Cripple.

"Mine! Gringalet. I will be your spider!" shouted Skeleton, throwing himself on Germain so that he could neither make a movement nor utter a cry. His voice died under the formidable grasp of the long iron fingers.

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNEXPECTED FRIEND.

"IF you are the spider, I will be the golden gnat, Skeleton of evil!" cried a voice, at the moment when Germain, surprised by the violence and sudden attack of his implacable enemy, fell backward on his bench, at the mercy of the ruffian, who, with one knee on his breast, held him by the throat. "Yes, I will be the gnat, and, what is more, a famous gnat!" repeated the man in the blue cap, of whom we have spoken; then, with a furious bound, overturning three or four prisoners who separated him from Germain, he sprang upon Skeleton, and struck him on his head, between the eyes, such a torrent of blows with his fists that the sound was like a hammer's upon an anvil.

The man in the blue cap (who was no other than the Chourineur), added, as he redoubled the rapidity of his hammering on the head of the Skeleton,

"It is the hail-storm of fisticuffs which M. Rudolf planted on my skull. I have learned the trick."

At this unexpected assault, the prisoners were struck with surpise, taking no part for or against the Chourineur. Many of them, still under the salutary impression of the story of Pique Vinaigre, were even satisfied at this incident, which might save Germain.

Skeleton, at first stunned, staggering like an ox under the butcher's axe, extended his hands mechanically to ward off the blows of his enemy. Germain was enabled to disengage himself from the mortal gripe, and half arose.

"But what is all this? who is this bruiser?" cried the Cripple; and springing upon the Chourineur, he tried to seize his arms from behind, while the latter endeavoured to hold down Skeleton on the bench.

The defender of Germain answered the attack by a kick, so violent, that he sent the Cripple rolling to the extremity of the circle formed by the prisoners.

Germain, of a livid paleness, half suffocated, kneeling beside the bench, did not appear to have any consciousness of what was passing around him. The strangulation had been so violent and painful he hardly breathed.

After he had recovered a little, Skeleton, by a desperate effort, succeeded in shaking off the Chourineur, and getting upon his feet. Panting, drunk with rage and hated, he was frightful. His cadaverous face streamed with blood, his upper lip, drawn back like a mad wolf's, displayed his teeth closely set against each other.

At length he cried, in a voice breathless with anger and fatigue, for his struggle with the Chourineur had been violent, "Cut him down, the turncoat, cowards! who let me be attacked traitorously, or the spy will escape."

During this kind of truce, the Chourineur, raising up the half-fainting Germain, had skilfully manœuvred to approach by degrees an angle of the wall, where he placed him.

Profitting by this excellent position of defence, the Chourineur could then, without fear of being attacked from behind, hold out a long time against the prisoners, on whom the courage and Herculean strength which he had just displayed made a powerful impression.

Pique-Vinaigre, alarmed, had disappeared

during the tumult, without any one remarking his absence.

Seeing the hesitation of the greater part of the prisoners, Skeleton said, "Come on, then, let us do the job for both of them, the big 'un and the little spy."

"Not too fast!" answered the Chourineur, preparing for the combat; "look out for yourself, Bones! If you wish to play Cut-in-Half, I will play Gargousse—I'll cut your weasand."

"Why don't you jump on him?" cried the Cripple. "Why does this madman defend the spy? Death to the spy, and him also! If he defends Germain, he is a traitor."

"Yes! yes!"

"Death to the betrayers!"

"Death!"

"Yes; death to the traitor who defends him!"

Such were the cries of several of the prisoners. A part of them, more merciful, cried, "Not before he speaks!"

"Yes; let him explain!"

"A man must not be killed without a hearing!"

"And without defence!"

"One would be a regular Cut-in-Half!"

"So much the better!" answered the Cripple and the partisans of Skeleton.

"One cannot do too much to a spy!"

"Death to him!"

"Fall upon him!"

"Let us support Skeleton!"

"Yes, yes! down with the Blue Cap!"

"No; let us sustain the Blue Cap! hang the Skeleton!" answered the party of the Chourineur.

"No; down with Blue Cap!"

"Down with Skeleton!"

"That's the ticket, pals!" cried the Chourineur, addressing those prisoners who ranged themselves on his side; "you have hearts; you will not see a man murdered who is half dead; only cowards are capable of such conduct. Skeleton is no bad joker; he is condemned in advance; that is the reason why he urges you on. But if you aid him to kill Germain, you will be roughly treated. Besides, I have a proposition to make. Skeleton wants to finish this young man. Well! let him come and take him, if he can: it will be a match between ourselves; we will walk into each other, and you will see; but he dares not—he is like Cut-in-Half, strong among the kids."

The vigour, energy, and hardy aspect of the Chovrineur had a powerful effect on the prisoners; a considerable number ranged themselves on his side, and surrounded Germain; Skeleton's party were grouped around that ruffian.

A bloody affray was about to take place, when the quick and measured step of a guard of infantry was heard in the court.

Pique-Vinaigre, profitting by the noise and general commotion, had gained the court and knocked at the wicket, in order to inform the keepers of what was going on in the hall.

The arrival of the soldiers put an end to the scene. Germain, Skeleton, and the Chourineur were conducted to the governor's presence; the first to lodge his complaint, the others to answer the charge of a fight in the prison.

The alarm and sufferings of Germain were so intense, his weakness so great, that he was obliged to lean on two of the keepers to reach the governor's room. There he became quite faint; his excoriated throat bore the livid and bloody marks of the Skeleton's iron fingers. A few seconds more, and the betrothed of Rigolette would have been strangled.

The keeper charged with the hall watch, who, as we have said, was much interested for Germain, gave him every assistance.

When he came to himself, when reflection succeeded the rapid and terrible emotions that had hardly left him the exercise of his reason, his first thought was for his deliverer.

"Thank you for your attentions, sir," he said to the keeper; "but for that courageous man, I was lost."

"How are you now?"

"Better. Ah! all that has passed seems to me like a horrid dream!"

"Recover yourself."

"And my saviour, where is he?"

"In the governor's room. He is telling him how the affray occurred. It appears that without him—"

"I should have been murdered, sir. Oh! tell me his name—who is he?"

"His name I do not know; he is nicknamed the Slasher; he was once in the galleys."

"And the crime which brought him here, perhaps, is not serious?"

"Very serious—burglary," said the keeper. "He will probably have the same dose as Pique-Vinaigre; fifteen or twenty years of hard labour, and the pillory, as he is an old offender."

Germain shuddered; he would have preferred to be bound by the ties of gratitude to one less criminal.

"Oh! it is frightful," he said; "and yet this man, without knowing me, took my part. So much courage, so much generosity."

"What would you have, sir? Sometimes there is some good left in these people. The most important fact is, that you are saved; to-morrow you will have your own cell, and for to-night you will sleep in the infirmary, according to orders. Come, courage, sir! The worst is over; when your pretty little visitor comes to see you, you can re-assure her; for, once in your own cell, you will have nothing more to fear."

"Oh! no, I will not speak to her about it; but I wish to thank my defender. However culpable he may be in the eyes of the law, he has none the less saved my life."

"I hear him leaving the governor's room. Skeleton is now to be examined; I will take them back together, directly, Skeleton to the dungeon, and the Slasher to the Lions' Den. He will, besides, be a little recompensed for what he has done for you; for as he is a bold and determined fellow, such as one should be to lead others, it is probable that he will take the place of Skeleton as provost."

The Slasher having crossed a little lobby, on which opened the governor's room entered the apartment where Germain was seated.

"Wait for me here," said the keeper to the Slasher; "I am going to learn what the governor decides to do with Skeleton, and I will return directly for you. There is our young man quite recovered; he wishes to thank you, and he has reason to, for without you all had been finished for him." The keener retired. Slasher's features were radiant with delight. He advanced joyfully, saying,

"Thunder! how happy I am at saving you!" And he extended his hand to Germain.

He, from a feeling of involuntary repulsion, at first drew back slightly, instead of taking the hand offered by the Slasher; then, recollecting that, after all, he owed his life to this man, he wished to make amends for this first movement of repugnance.

But the Slasher had perceived it; a gloom spread over his face, and drawing back in his turn, he said, with much bitterness,

"Ah! it is right. Pardon me, sir."

"No, it is I who should ask your pardon. Am I not a prisoner like you? I should only think of the service you have rendered me; you have saved my life. Your hand, friend, I entreat you. I pray you, your hand."

"Thank you; now it is useless; the first movement is everything. If you had at first given me your hand, that would have given me pleasure; but, on reflection, it is I who do not wish it. Not because I am a prisoner, like you, but," he added, in a hesitating and gloomy manner, "because, before I was here, I was—"

"The keeper has told me all," replied Germain, interrupting him; "but you have none the less saved my life."

"I have done but my duty and pleasure, for I know who you are, M. Germain."

"You know me?"

"A little, my boy; I talk to you like a father," said the Slasher, resuming his tone of habitual carelessness; "and you would be very wrong to place my arrival at La Force on the back of chance. If I had not known you, I should not have been here."

Germain looked at the Slasher with the utmost surprise.

"How, because you knew me—

"I am here a prisoner in La Force."

"I wish to believe you; but—"

"But you do not believe me."

"I wish to say, that it is impossible for me to comprehend how it can be that I have anything to do with your imprisonment."

"Have anything to do? You have everything."

"I have this misfortune!"

"A misfortune! on the contrary, it is I who am indebted to you; and very much, that is more."

"To me—you indebted to me!"

"Yes, for having procured me the advantage of making a call La Force."

"Truly," said Germain, passing his hand over his face, "I do not know whether the terrible shock I received has impaired my reason, but it is impossible for me to understand you. The keeper has just told me that you were accused of—of—"

And Germain hesitated.

"Of robbery, I daresay? yes, burglary; and at night, into the bargain! everything under full sail," cried the Slasher, shouting with laughter. "Nothing was wanting—my robbery had all the modern improvements to make it a bang-up work."

Germain, painfully affected by the audacious boldness of the Slasher, could not help saying, "How, you, so brave, so generous, talk thus? Do you not know the terrible punishment that awaits you?"

"Twenty years in the galleys, and the pillory! I am a headstrong scoundrel, to take it so coolly? But what would you have when one is in for it? And yet to think that it is you, M. Germain," added the Slasher, uttering a heavy sigh, in a manner jokingly contrite, 'who are the cause of my misfortune!"

"When you explain yourself more clearly, I shall understand you. Joke as much as you please, my gratitude for the service you have rendered me will be none the less," said Germain, sadly.

"I ask your pardon, M. Germain," answered the Slasher, becoming more serious; "you do not like to see me laugh at this; let us speak no more about it. I must have a little explanation with you, and force you, perhaps, once more to offer me your hand."

"I do not doubt it; for, notwithstanding the crime of which you are accused, and of which you accuse yourself, everything in you announces courage and frankness. I am sure you are unjustly suspected; appearances, perhaps, compromise you."

"Oh! as to that, you are wrong, M. Germain," said the Slasher, so seriously this time, and with such an accent of sincerity, that Germain was forced to believe him. "As true as that I have a protector" (the Slasher took off his cap), "who is for me what the Judge above is for the good priests, I robbed at night, by breaking in at a window; I was caught in the fact, and secured, with the stolen goods in my possession."

"But want, hunger, drove you, then, to this extremity?"

"Hunger? I had a hundred and twenty francs when they arrested me—the change of a thousand-franc note, without counting that the protector of whom I have spoken, who does not know that I am here, will never let me want anything. But since I have spoken to you of my protector, you ought to believe that I am speaking the truth, because before him it is like going down on your knees. The torrent of blows I rained down on bones is a Fashion of his, which I copied after nature. The idea of the robbery on account of him, came into my head. In fine, if you are here, instead of being strangled by Skeleton, thanks to him."

"But this protector?"

"Is also yours."

"Mine?"

"Yes! M. Rudolf, protects you, when I say M., it is his highness that I ought to say, for he is a prince; but I am accustomed to call him Mr. Rudolf, and he allows it.

"You mistake," said Germain, more and surprised; "I do not know any prince."

"Yes, but he knows you; you do not doubt it? It is possible—it is his way. He hears there is a good man in trouble—slap! the good man is relieved, and he is neither seen nor known. I perplex you; for him happiness falls from the clouds like a tile on the head. Thus, patience! some day or other you will receive your tile."

"Truly, what you say confounds me."

"You will have a great deal more of the same! To return to my protector: some time since, after a service which he pretended I had rendered him, he procured me a slap-up situation. I have no need to tell you what—it would be too long; in a word, he sent me to Marseilles, to embark for my place. I left Paris contented as a beggar! good! but soon that changed. A supposition: let us say that I left on a fine sunny day; well! the next day is cloudy; the day after very cloudy, and every succeeding day more and more so, until, at length, it became as black as the devil. Do you comprehend."

"Not exactly."

"Well, let us see. Did you ever keep a pup?"

"What a singular question."

"Have you had a dog that loved you well and that was lost?"

"No."

"Then I will tell you at once, that when at a distance from M. Rudolf, I was restless, uneasy, alarmed, like a dog that had lost his master. It was brutish, but the dogs also are brutes, and this does not prevent them from being attached to their masters, and remembering quite as much the good mouthfuls as the kickings they are accustomed to receive; and M. Rudolf had given me better than good mouthfuls, for, do you see, for me M. Rudolf is all in all. From a wicked, brutal, savage, and riotous rascal, he made me a kind of honest man, by saying only two words to me; but those words were like magic."

"And those words, what are they? What did he say to you?"

"He told me that I had still a 'heart' and 'honour,' although I had been to the hulks—not for having robbed, it is true. Oh! that, never, but for what is worse, perhaps—for having killed. Yes," said the Slasher, in a sad tone, "yes, killed in a moment of anger, because from my childhood, brought up like a brute, without father or mother, abandoned in the streets of Paris, I knew neither God nor the devil, nor good nor evil, nor strong nor weak. Sometimes the blood rushed to my eyes, I saw red, and if I had a knife in my hand I stabbed—I stabbed! I was like a wolf; I could not frequent any other places than those where I met beggars and ruffians; I did not put crape on my hat for that. I was obliged to live in the mire; I did not even know I was there. But, when M. Rudolf told me that since, in spite of the contempt of the world and misery, instead of stealing, as others did, I had preferred to work as much as I could, and at what I could, that showed I had a heart and honour, Thunder! those two words had the same effect upon me as if some one had caught me by the hair, and raised me a thousand feet in the air above the beggars with whom I lived, and showed me in what mire I wallowed. Then of course, I said, 'Thank you, I have enough.' Then my heart beat with something besides anger, and I swore to myself always to preserve this honour of which M. Rudolf had spoken. You see, M. Germain, by telling me with kindness that I was not as bad as I thought, M. Rudolf encouraged me, and thanks to him, I have become better than I was."

On hearing this language, Germain comprehended still less how the Slasher could have committed the robbery of which he accused himself.

"No," thought Germain, "it is impossible; this man, who suffers himself to be thus carried away by the simple words honour and heart, cannot have committed this robbery of which he speaks with such ease."

The Slasher continued, without remarking the astonishment of Germain:

"Finally, the reason why I am to M. Rudolf like a dog to his master, is that he has raised me in my own estimation. Before I knew him, I was only sensible to the touch; but he made me feel within, and deep down, I bet you. Once separated from him and the place where he dwelt, I found myself like a body without a soul. As I travelled on, I said to myself, 'He leads such a queer life! he mingles with such great scoundrels (I know something about it) that he will risk his bones twenty times a day,' and it is under these circumstances that I could play the dog for him and defend my master; for I have good teeth. But, on the other hand, he had told me, 'You must, my friend, make yourself useful to others; go, then, where you may be of some good.' I had a great desire to answer him, 'For me, there is no one to serve but you, M. Rudolf.' But I did not dare. He had told me to 'Go.' I went; and I have obeyed him as well as I was able. But, thunder! when the time came to get into the tub, leave France, and place the sea between M. Rudolf and me, without the hope of ever seeing him again, in truth, I had not the courage. He told his correspondent to give me a heap of money as heavy as I am when I should embark. I went to see the gentleman. I told him, 'It is impossible just now; I prefer the solid ground. Give me enough to get back to Paris on foot. I have good legs. I cannot embark. M. Rudolf may say what he pleases; he will be angry, he will not see me any more. Possibly I shall see him; I shall be where he

is; and if he continues the life he leads, sooner or later, I shall arrive in time, perhaps, to put myself between a knife and him. And, besides, I cannot live so far away from him.' At length they gave me enough for my journey. I arrived at Paris. I do not fear trifles; but once back, fear seized me. What could I say to M. Rudolf to excuse myself for having returned without his permission? Bah! after all, he will not eat me. What is to be, will be. I go to find his friend, a bald man — another trump, this one. Thunder! when M. Murphy came in I said, 'My fate will be decided.' I felt my throat dry—my heart beat a tattoo. I expected to be scolded soundly. The worthy man received me as if he had left me the evening previous. He told me that M. Rudolf, far from being angry, wished to see me at once. In short he took me to my protector. Thunder! when I found myself again face to face with him, who has such an open hand and so good a heart, terrible as a lion and gentle as a child, a prince, who has worn a blouse like me—to have the opportunity (which I bless) of punching my eye. Faith, M. Germain, on thinking of all these fascinations which he possesses, I felt myself done up. I wept like a doe. Well! instead of laughing—for imagine my mug when I weep — M. Rudolf said to me, seriously,

"'So you are back again, my good fellow?'

"'Yes, M. Rudolf, pardon me if I am wrong, but I could not go. Make me a little nest in a corner of your court, give me my food, or let me earn it here; that is all I ask from you; and, above all, do not be angry because I have returned.'

"'I am so far from that, my good friend, that you have returned just in time to render me a service.'

"'I, M. Rudolf! Can it be possible! Well, do you see, it must be, as you told me, that there is Something upstairs; otherwise, how explain that I arrive here just at the moment when you have need of me? What is it, then, I can do for you, M. Rudolf—jump from the top of the towers of Notre Dame?'

"'Less than that my man. An honest, excellent young man, in whom I am as much interested as if he were my son, is unjustly accused of robbery, and confined in La Force; he is called Germain, and is of a mild and gentle disposition; the scoundrels with whom he is imprisoned, have taken an aversion to him; he may be in great danger; you, who have unfortunately the experience of a prison life, and know a great number of prisoners, could you not, in case some of your old comrades should be at La Force, could you not go and see them, and, by promises of money which shall be faithfully kept, engage them to protect this unhappy young man?'"

"But who, then, is this generous and unknown man, who takes so much interest in my fate?" said Germain, more and more surprised.

"You will know, perhaps; as for me, I am ignorant. To return to my conversation with M. Rudolf: while he was talking, an idea struck me, but an idea so laughable, that I could not keep from laughing before him.

"'What is the matter?' said he.

"M. Rudolf, I laugh because I am content, and I am content because I have the means of placing your M. Germain out of all dangers, by giving him a protector who will defend him bravely; for, once the young man is under the wing of the fellow of whom I speak, there is not one of them will dare to come and look under his nose."

"'Very well, my friend; it is doubtless one of your old companions?'

"'Exactly, M. Rudolf; he entered La Force some days ago; I learned this on my arrival; but we must have some money.' 'How much?'

"'A thousand francs.' 'Here they are.'

"'Thank you, M. Rudolf; in two days you shall hear from me; your servant, sirs.' Thunder! the king was not my master; I could render a service to M. Rudolf, by joining you: it was that which was famous."

"I begin to understand, or rather, I tremble to understand," cried Germain; "such fidelity cannot be possible! to come to protect me, defend me in this prison, you have perhaps, committed a robbery? oh! this would be the sorrow of my whole life." "Stop a bit! M. Rudolf had told me that I had a heart and honour; these words are my law, do you see; and he can tell me so yet; for if I am no better than formerly, at least I am no worse."

"But this robbery? this robbery? If you have not committed it, how are you here?"

"Stop a moment. Here is the plant; with my thousand francs I went and bought a black wig; I shaved off my whiskers; I put on blue spectacles; I stuck a pillow on my back, and made up a hump. I began at once to look for one or two rooms on a ground floor in a retired street. I found my affair in the Rue du Provence; I paid my rent in advance under the name of Grégoire. The next day I went to the Temple to buy furniture for my two rooms, always wearing my black wig, hump, and blue barnacles, so that I might be well known. I sent the things to the Rue du Provence, and six silver spoons and forks which I bought on the Boulevard Saint Denis, still in my disguise as a hunchback.

"I returned to put all these in order in my domicile, I said to the porter that I should not sleep there for two days, and I carried away my key. The windows of the two rooms were fastened by strong shutters. Before I went away, I left one unfastened on the inside. At night I took off my wig, goggles, and hump, with which I had been to make my purchases and hire my rooms. I put this disguise in a trunk, which I sent to the address of M. Murphy the friend of M. Rudolf, begging him to take care of it. I bought this blouse and blue cap, and a jenny, and at one o'clock in the morning I came to the Rue du Provence to hang about my lodgings, waiting until the patrol should pass, to commence my robbery, my burglary, in order to be copped?'

The Slasher was unable to suppress a hearty fit of laughter.

"Oh! I comprehend," cried Germain.

"But you will see if I had not ill luck: no police passed. I could have robbed myself twenty times at my ease. At length, about two o'clock, I heard the snails at the end of the street; I opened my window, and broke two or three panes of glass to make a devil of a noise; I dashed in the window, jumped into the room, and seized the money box and some clothes. Happily, the patrol had heard the jingling of the glass just as I got out of the window. I was nabbed by the guard, who, at the noise of breaking glass had come to see what was the matter.

"They knocked at the door; the porter opened it; they sent for the commissary; he came; the porter said that the rooms had been taken the evening previous, by a gentleman with a hunchback, with black hair and blue spectacles, and who was named Grégoire. I had the flaxen wool which you see; I had my eyes open like a hare in her form; I was as straight as a Russian at the command, 'carry arms!' They could never take me for the hunchback, with blue spectacles and black locks. I confessed everything; I was arrested; they took me to the station—from there, here; and I arrived at a good moment, just in time to snatch from the claws of the Skeleton the young man of whom M. Rudolf had said, 'I am as much interested for him as for my own son.'"

"Oh! what do I not owe you for such services!" cried Germain.

"It is not me—it is to M. Rudolf you owe it."

"But the cause of his interest for me?"

"He will tell you, unless he does not choose to do so; for often he is pleased to do good, and if you take it into your head to ask him why, he will not mind answering, 'Mind your own business!'"

"And does M. Rudolf know that you are here?"

"Not so stupid as to tell him my idea; he would not, perhaps, have allowed me the fun, and, without bragging, it is rich!"

"But the risks you have run and still run?"

"What did I risk? not to be conducted to La Force, where you were, that is true. But I counted on the protection of M. Rudolf, to have my prison changed and join you; a lord like him can do everything. And when I was once shut up, he would have wished me to be of service to you."

"But when your trial comes on?"

"Well! I will beg M. Murphy to send me my trunk; I will put on before the big wig, my big wig, the blue spectacles, and the hump, and I will become M. Grégoire again, send for the porter who let me the chamber, and for the shopkeepers who sold me the furniture; so much for the robbed. If they wish to see the robber again, I will throw off my disguise, and it will be as clear as day that the robbed and the robber make the sum total of the Slasher, neither more or less. Then, what the devil, would you have them do to me, when it shall be proved that I have robbed myself?"

"That's true!" said Germain, more assured; "but since you felt so much interest for me, why did you not speak to me on entering the prison?"

"I knew at once the plot which was formed against you; I could have exposed it before Pique Vinaigre had commenced his story; but to denounce even such ruffians does not go down with me. I preferred to depend upon my fists to drag you from the paws of Skeleton. And, besides, when I saw this brigand, I said to myself, 'Here is a fine occasion to practice the boxing of M. Rudolf to which I am indebted for the honour of his acquaintance.'"

"But if all the prisoners had taken part against you, what could you have done?"

"Then I should have screamed like an eagle, and called for help! But it suited me to do my own cooking myself; to be able to say to M. Rudolf, 'No one but I meddled in the affair. I have defended, and will defend, your young man, be tranquil!'"

At this moment the keeper entered quickly.

"M. Germain, come, make haste, to the governor's room. He wishes to speak to you at once. And you, Slasher, my boy, descend to the hall. You shall be provost if it suits you, for you have every requisite to fill the office, and the prisoners will not joke with a big'un of your calibre."

"All the same to me—as well be captain as soldier while one is here."

"Will you still refuse my hand?" said Germain, cordially, to the Slasher.

"No, M. Germain, no; I believe that now I can allow myself this pleasure, and I do it with all my heart."

"We shall see each other again, for I am now under your protection. I shall have nothing more to fear, and from my cell I shall descend each day to the court."

"Be assured, if I wish it, they shall not speak to you except on all fours. But, now I think of it, you know how to write; put down on paper what I have just related to you, and send it to M. Rudolf; he will know that he need have no more uneasiness about you, and that I am here for a good motive; for if he should learn elsewhere that the Slasher had stolen, and he did not know the game—thunder! that would not suit me."

"Rest satisfied: this very night I will write to my unknown protector; to-morrow you will give me his address, and the letter shall be sent. Adieu, once more; thank you, my good fellow."

"Adieu, M. Germain; I go to return among this band of rascals, of whom I am provost; they will have to march pretty straight, or stand from under?"

"When I think that on my account you go to live for some time among these wretches—"

"What is that to me, now that there is no risk of their contaminating me? M. Rudolf has washed me too well. I am insured against fire

And the Slasher followed the keeper.

Germain entered the apartment of the governor. What was his surprise—he found Rigolette there.

Rigolette, pale, with deep emotion, her eyes bathed in tears, and yet smiling through these tears, her face expressed a sentiment of joy, of happiness indescribable.

"I have good news to tell you, sir," said the governor. "The judges have just declared that no action lies against you, and I have the order to set you immediately at liberty."

"What do you say, sir? Can it be possible?"

Rigolette wished to speak; her too lively emotion prevented her; she could only make to Germain an affirmative sign with her head.

"This young lady arrived here a few moments after I had received the order to set you at liberty," added the governor. "A letter of all-powerful recommendation which she brought me, has informed me of the touching devotion she has shown you during your stay in prison, sir. It is, then, with great pleasure that I have sent for you, certain that you would be very happy to give your arm to the lady on leaving the place."

"A dream! surely it is a dream!" said Germain. "Oh, sir, what kindness! Pardon me if surprise—joy—prevents me from thanking you as I ought."

"And I, too, M. Germain, cannot find a word to say," added Rigolette. "Judge of my happiness: on leaving you, I found the friend of M. Rudolf waiting for me."

"M. Rudolf again!" said the astonished Germain.

"Yes; now I can tell you all. M. Murphy said to me then, 'Germain is free; here is a letter for the governor of the prison; before you arrive, he will have received the order to set Germain at liberty, and you can bring him away.' I could not believe what I heard, and yet it was true. Quick—quick—I took a cab—I arrived—and it is now below waiting for us."

We renounce the attempt to describe the delights of the two lovers when they left La Force; of the evening they passed in the little chamber of Rigolette, which Germain left at eleven o'clock for a modest furnished apartment.

Let us sum up in a few words the practical or theoretical ideas we have endeavoured to place in relief in this episode of a prison life.

We shall esteem ourselves very happy if we have shown,

The insufficiency, the impotency, and the danger of imprisonment in common.

The disproportion which exists between the appreciation and punishment of certain crimes, and those of certain other offences.

And, finally, the material impossibility for poorer classes to enjoy the benefits of the civil laws.

CHAPTER XII.

PUNISHMENT.

WE will conduct the reader again to the office of the notary, Jacques Ferrand.

Thanks to the habitual loquacity of the clerks, almost constantly occupied with the increasing caprices of their patron, we can learn the events that occurred since the disappearance of Cecily.

"A hundred to ten, if the present state of his health continues, before a month the governor will be as dead as a doornail."

"The fact is, that since the servant who had the air of an Alsatian has left the house, he has had nothing but skin on his bones."

"And what skin!"

"I'll wager he was in love with this Alsatian, for it is since her departure that he has shrivelled up so?"

"He, in love? what nonsense! on the contrary, he sees the priests more than ever; and the parish cure, a very respectable man (one must be just), went away yesterday, saying (I overheard him) to another priest who accompanied him, 'This is admirable! M. Ferrand is the personification of Charity and Generosity."

"The cure said that? of himself? without prompting?"

"Yes! I heard him."

"Then I can't understand it at all. The cure has the reputation, and deserves it, of being what is called a right good pastor."

"It is true; and of him we must speak seriously and with respect; he is as good and charitable as 'Little Blue Mantle,' * and when one says that of a man, he is judged."

"Ay, that is not a little to say."

"No. For Little Blue Mantle, as well as for the good priest, the poor have only one word, and a good word it is, from the heart."

"Then I return to my idea; when the cure affirms a thing, he must be believed, as he is incapable of telling a falsehood; and yet to think as he does, that our master is charitable and generous—that sticks in my throat."

"Oh! how pretty that is, Chalamel! how pretty!" "Seriously, I would just as soon believe that as I would a miracle. It would not be more difficult." "M. Ferrand generous! he would skin an egg!" "And yet, the forty sous for our breakfast?" "Beautiful proof! It is like a pimple on the end of a man's nose—it is an accident."

"Yes, but, on the other hand, the head clerk told me that three days ago he sold out an enormous amount of treasury bonds, and that—"

"Well! Speak then." "It is a secret."

"So much the more reason for telling it."

"Your word and honour that you wont mention it?"

* [We must be allowed to mention here, with veneration, the name of that excellent man, M. Champion; with whom we have not the honour of a personal acquaintance, but of whom all the poor of Paris speak with as much respect as gratitude.]

"On the heads of our children, we give it."

"And besides, let us remember what the great king Louis XIV. majestically said to the Doge of Venice before his assembled court:

'When a secrets's told a clerk,
Its exposure he'll not burke!'

"Good! there is Chalamel with his proverbs!"

"I demand the head of Chalamel!"

"Proverbs are the wisdom of nations; it is on that account I require your secret."

"Come, none of your nonsense. I tell you the head clerk made me promise to speak of it to no one."

"Yes; but he did not say that you should not tell it to every one?"

"It shall not go out of the office. Go on."

"He is dying with desire to tell us the secret."

"Well! the governor is about selling his notary's business. At this present moment, perhaps, it is done."

"Nonsense!"

"Here is news!"

"Let us see, without charge, who charges himself with the charge which he discharges?"

"Tush! how insupportable Chalamel is with his riddles."

"Do you think I know to whom he sells it?"

"If he sells it, it is because, perhaps, he wishes to come out, give balls, routs, in the gay world. After all, there is something in it."

"I think so, indeed! The head clerk spoke of more than a million, including the value of the business."

"More than a million!"

"It is said that he has been gambling in stocks secretly with Commandant Robert, and that he has made much money."

"Not to speak of his living like a curmudgeon."

"But these misers, when once they begin to spend money, become as prodigal as they were once mean."

"Well, I agree with Chalamel; I think that now the governor is coming out."

"And he would be most stupendously in the wrong not to bury himself in voluptuousness, and not to plunge into the delights of Golconda, if he has the means; for, as the misty Ossian says, in the grotto of Fingal,

'All-Ariel is it, yet not-arial. too,
That he should still be right,
Who roseate tapestry has in open view,
And of his gold makes light.'

"I demand the head of Chalamel!"

"It is absurd!"

"Yes, and the governor looks very much like a man who thinks of amusing himself. He has a face that might cause the devil to appear on earth."

"And then the cure, who boasts of his charity!"

"Well-ordered charity begins at home."

"You do not know your ten commandments, heathen," the governor asks from himself the alms of great pleasures, it is his duty to grant them."

"What astonishes me is, that this intimate friend, who seems to have dropped from the clouds, never leaves him."

"Not to mention his ugly face."

"He is as red as a carrot."

"I am rather inclined to believe that this intruder is the fruit of a first false step which M. Ferrand had committed in the springtime of life, for, as the Eagle of Meaux said concerning the taking of the veil by the tender La Valliere,

'Young or old, which e'er you love,
Crows may have an offspring dove!'"

"I demand the head of Chalamel!"

"In truth, with him it is impossible to talk reason a moment."

"What stupidity! To say that this stranger is the son of the governor, when he is the oldest as is easy to be seen—"

"Well, what of that?"

"How? what of that? The son older than the father?"

"It is very plain; in that case, the intruder must have made the false-step, and be the father of M. Ferrand, instead of being his son."

"I demand the head of Chalamel!"

"Do not listen to him; you know, when once he is in the way of saying stupid things, there is no end to it."

"What is certain is, that this intruder has a bad face, and does not leave M. Ferrand for a moment."

"He is always with him in his cabinet; they eat together; one does not move without the other."

"I think I have seen the man before."

"I think not."

"Tell me, gents, have you not also remarked, that for some days past, there comes regularly almost every two hours a man with great light moustaches and a military air, who asks the porter for the intruder? The intruder comes down, talks for a moment with the man with moustaches, after which the latter makes a half turn like an automaton, to come again in two hours after."

"It is true; I have remarked him. It seems to me, also, that I meet some men when I go into the street who appear to be watching the house."

"Seriously, there is something extraordinary going on here."

"Who lives long enough will see."

"On this subject the head clerk, perhaps, knows more than we do. But he plays the diplomatist."

"Exactly; and where is he, then, for so long a time?"

"He has gone to the house of the countess who was stabbed; it appears that she is now out of danger."

"The countess M'Gregor?"

"Yes; this morning she sent for the governor to come at once, but he sent the head clerk in his place."

"It is perhaps for a will."

"No, because she is better."

"Hasn't the work enough now, the head clerk, since he has taken Germain's place also?"

"Speaking of Germain, here is another strange thing."

"What is it?"

"In order to have him set at liberty, the governor has declared it was he himself who made an error in his accounts, and that he had found the money which he accused Germain of stealing."

"I do not find this strange, but just; you recollect I always said that Germain was incapable of theft."

"It must, nevertheless, have been very disagreeable for him to be arrested and confined as a thief."

"If I were in his place I would sue Jacques Ferrand for damages."

"The least he could do would be to reinstate him as cashier, in order to prove that Germain was not culpable."

"Yes, but perhaps Germain would not be willing."

"Is he still at the farm, where he went on coming out of prison, and from which he wrote us to announce M. Ferrand's discontinuance of the suit?"

"Probably, for yesterday I went to the place where he directed us to go; they told me that he was still in the country, and that I could write to him at Bonqueval, near Ecouen, at Madame George's."

"Oh! a carriage!" said Chalamel, leaning over towards the window.

"Nothing but a hackney-coach."

"And who gets out?"

"Stop a moment! Oh! a black gown!"

"A woman! a woman! Oh! let us see."

"This gutter-jumper is indecently sensitive at his age; he only thinks of women; we shall have to chain him up, or he will carry off the Sabines from the streets; for, as said the Swan of Cambray in his Treatise on Education for the Dauphin,

"'Of Gutter-jumper have a care
Who assaults the lovely fair.'"

"I demand the head of Chalamel!"

"M. Chalamel, you said a black robe, I thought."

"It is the cure, goose! Let him be an example for you."

"The cure of the parish? The good pastor?"

"Himself."

"Here is a worthy man!"

"He is no Jesuit, not he."

"I think not; and if all the priests were like him, everybody would be devout."

"Silence! some one opens the door."

And all the clerks, bending over their desks, began to scratch away with apparent industry, making their pens pass rapidly over the paper.

The pale face of this priest was at once mild and grave, intelligent and venerable; its expression full of benevolence and serenity.

A small black cap concealed his tonsure, and his long gray hair floated on the collar of his maroon-coloured coat.

Let us add, that from his simple credulity, this excellent priest had always been and was still the dupe of Jacques Ferrand's deep and cunning hypocrisy.

"Your worthy master is in his cabinet, my son?" asked the cure.

"Yes, M. l'Abbe," said Chalamel, rising respectfully. And he opened for the priest the door leading into a room adjoining the office.

Hearing some one speaking with vehemence in the cabinet of the notary, the abbe, not wishing to hear, walked rapidly towards the door and knocked.

"Come in," said a voice with an Italian accent, and the priest found himself face to face with Jacques Ferrand and Polidori.

It would seem that the clerks were not wrong when they prophesied the death of their employer at no distant day.

Since the flight of Cecily the notary was hardly to be recognised.

Although his visage was of a frightful thinness, and of a cadaverous hue, a hectic flush coloured his hollow cheeks; a nervous shivering, except when interrupted by convulsive spasms, agitated his frame continually; his bony hands were dry and burning; his large green spectacles concealed his blood-shot eyes, which sparkled with the fire of a consuming fever; in a word, this sinister face betrayed the ravages of a rapid consumption.

The physiognomy of Polidori formed a contrast with that of the notary; nothing could be more bitterly, more coldly ironical than the expression of this scoundrel; a forest of fiery red hair, interspersed with some silvered locks, crowned his high and wrinkled forehead; his penetrating eyes, green as the ocean wave, were close to his hooked nose; his mouth, with its thin lips, expressed wickedness and sarcasm. Polidori, completely dressed in black, was seated beside the desk of Jacques Ferrand.

At the sight of the priest they both arose.

"Well! how do you get on, my worthy M. Ferrand?" said the abbe with solicitude; "are you a little better?"

"I am always in the same state, M. l'Abbe; the fever does not leave me," answered the notary; "the want of sleep is killing me. But the will of heaven be done!"

"See, M. l'Abbe," added Polidori with emphasis, "what pious resignation! my poor friend is always the same; he only finds a solace for his sufferings in doing good."

"I do not deserve these praises; have the goodness to dispense with them," said the notary, dryly, with difficulty concealing his anger. "To the Lord alone belongs the appreciation of good and evil; I am only a miserable sinner."

"We are all sinners," answered the abbe, gently; "but we have not all the charity which distinguishes you, my respected friend. There are very few who, like you, dispossess themselves of so much of their earthly wealth

to employ it during their lifetime in a manner so Christian-like. Do you still persist in selling your business, in order to devote yourself more entirely to the practice of religion?"

"Since yesterday, my business is sold, M. l'Abbe; some concessions have enabled me to realise (a rare thing) the cash down: this sum, added to others, will enable me to found the institution of which I have spoken, and of which I have definitively arranged the plan that I am about to submit to you."

"Ah! my worthy friend," said the abbe, with deep and reverential admiration, "to do so much good—so unostentatiously—and, I may say, so naturally! I repeat to you, people like you are rare; they will receive their reward.

"It is true that very few persons unite, like Jacques Ferrand, riches to piety, intelligence to charity,' said Polidori, with an ironical smile, which escaped the notice of the good abbe.

At this new and sarcastic eulogium, the hand of the notary was clutched; he cast from under his spectacles a look of deadly hatred on Polidori.

"You see, M. l'Abbe," the bosom friend of Jacques Ferrand hastened to say, "he has continually these nervous spasms, and he will do nothing for them. He worries me; he is his own executioner, my poor friend!

At these words of Polidori, the notary shuddered still more convulsively, but he composed himself again.

A man less simple than the abbe would have remarked, during this conversation, and, above all, during what is about to follow, the notary's constrained manner of speaking; for it is hardly necessary to say that a will superior to his own, the will of Rudolf, in a word, imposed on this man words and acts diametrically opposed to his true character.

Thus, sometimes pushed to extremities, the notary appeared reluctant to obey this all-powerful and invisible authority; but a look from Polidori put an end to his indecision; then, constraining with a sigh of rage his most violent feelings, Jacques Ferrand submitted to the yoke which he could not break.

"Alas! M. l'Abbe," said Polidori, who seemed to take delight in torturing his victim, as is said vulgarly, by pricks of a pin, "my poor friend neglects his health too much. Tell him to be more careful of himself, if not for his own sake, for his friends', or, at least, for the unfortunates of whom he is the hope and support."

"Enough! enough!" murmured the notary.

"No, it is not enough," said the priest, with emotion; "we cannot repeat to you too often that you do not belong to yourself, and that it is wrong thus to neglect your health. In ten years that I have known you, I have never seen you ill; but for a month past you are no longer recognisable. I am so much the more struck with this alteration of your features, as I was for some time without seeing you. Thus, at our first interview, I could not conceal my surprise; but the change I have remarked in you for the last few days is much more serious, you sink every hour, you give us much uneasiness. I implore you, my worthy friend, take care of your health."

"I am very sensible of your solicitude, M. l'Abbe; but I assure you that my condition is not so alarming as you think."

"Since you are so obstinate," said Polidori, "I will tell everything to the abbe; he loves you—he esteems you—he honours you much; how much the more will he honour you when he shall know your new merits—when he shall know the true cause of your wasting away?"

"What is this?" asked the abbe.

"M. l'Abbe," said the notary, with impatience, "I begged you to come here to communicate to you projects of high importance, and not to hear me ridiculously praised by *my friend.*"

"You know, Jacques, that from me you must be resigned to hear everything," said Polidori, looking fixedly at the notary, who cast down his eyes, and remained silent. Polidori continued:

"You perhaps remarked, M. l'Abbe, that the first symptoms of his nervous complaint appeared a short time after the abominable scandal which Louise Morel caused in this house."

The notary shuddered.

"You know of the crime of this unhappy girl, sir?" demanded the astonished priest; "I thought you had arrived but a few days since at Paris?"

"Without doubt, M. l'Abbe; but Jacques has related everything to me, as his friend—as his physician, for he attributes these nervous attacks almost entirely to the indignation which the crime of Louise Morel caused him. This is nothing, as yet; my poor friend, alas! had new trials to endure, which, you see, have ruined his health. An old servant, who for many years was attached to him by the ties of gratitude—"

"Madame Seraphin?" said the cure, interrupting Polidori; "I have heard of the death of this unfortunate, drowned by her own imprudence, and I comprehend the grief of M. Ferrand: it is not easy to forget ten years of faithful services; such regrets do credit to the master as well as to the servant."

"M. l'Abbe" said the notary, "I entreat you, do not speak of my virtues—you confuse me—it is painful."

"And who will speak of them then—will it be yourself?" answered Polidori, affectionately; "but you will be obliged to praise him still more, M. l'Abbe: you perhaps do not know who is the servant that took the place of Louise Morel and Madame Seraphin. You do not know what he has done for this poor Cecily, M. l'Abbe, for so she is named."

The notary started from his seat, his eyes sparkling under his spectacles, a burning red diffused over his livid face.

"Hush! be silent!" he cried; "not a word more. I forbid it

"Come, come, calm yourself," said the abbe smiling benevolently; "another good action to reveal? As for myself, I strongly approve of the generous indiscretion of your friend. I did not know this servant, for it was just after her arrival that my worthy friend, overwhelmed with business, was obliged momentarily, to my great regret, to interrupt our relations."

"It was to conceal from you this new good action he meditated, M. l'Abbe; thus, although his modesty revolts at the mention of it, he must hear me, and you shall know all," said Polidori, smiling.

Jacques Ferrand was silent; he leaned on his desk, and concealed his face in his hands.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BANK FOR THE POOR.

"IMAGINE then, M. l'Abbe," resumed Polidori, addressing the cure, but emphasizing, as it were, each phrase by an ironical glance at Jacques Ferrand, "imagine that my friend found in his new servant, who, as I have already told you, was called Cecily, the best qualities, great modesty, angelic sweetness, and, above all, much piety. This is not all; Jacques, you know, owes to his long practice in business affairs, an extreme penetration; he soon saw that this young woman, for she was young and very pretty, M. l'Abbe—that this young and pretty woman was not made for a servant, and that, to principles most virtuously austere, she added solid accomplishments very diversified."

"Ah, indeed, this is strange," said the abbe, much interested. "I was entirely ignorant of these circumstances; but what is the matter, my good M. Ferrand? You seem to be suffering."

"In truth," said the notary, wiping the cold sweat from his brow, "I have a slight headache, but it will soon pass away."

Polidori shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "Observe, M. l'Abbe," he added, "that Jacques is always thus when any one unveils his hidden charities; he is so hypocritical on the subject of the good he does! Happily, I am here, and justice shall be done him. Let us return to Cecily. In her turn she had soon found out the excellence of his heart, and, when he interrogated her as to the past, she confessed to him that, a stranger, without resources, and reduced by the misconduct of her husband to the most humble condition, she regarded it as a boon from Heaven that she had been enabled to enter the house of a man so venerable as M. Ferrand. At the sight of so much misfortune, resignation, virtue, Jacques did not hesitate; he wrote to the native country of this unfortunate, to ascertain the truth of her story; the answer confirmed it in every particular; then, sure of not misplacing his benefactions, Jacques blessed Cecily as a father, sent her back to her own country with a sum of money which will enable her to wait for better days, and the chance of improving her condition. I will not add a word of praise for Jacques; the facts are more eloquent than my words."

"Good, very good," cried the cure, much affected. "M. l'Abbe," said Jacques Ferrand, in a hollow voice, "I do not wish to trespass upon your precious moments; speak no more of me, I implore you, but of the project for which I have begged you to come here and favour me with your advice."

"I perceive that the praises of your friend wound your modesty; let us occupy ourselves, then, with your new good deeds, and forget that you are the author; but, first, let us speak of the business you intrusted to my care. I have according to your wishes, deposited in the Bank of France, and in my name, the sum of one hundred thousand crowns, destined to the restitution of which you are the intermediate agent and which was to pass through my hands. You have preferred that this deposit should not remain in your possession, although it seems to me it had been quite as secure there as in the bank."

"In that respect, M. l'Abbe, I have conformed to the intentions of the unknown author of this restitution. It is an affair of conscience. At his request I have placed this sum in your hands, and begged you to remit it to madame, the widow Fermont, whose maiden name was Renneville" (the voice of the notary trembled slightly in uttering these names), "when she should present herself to you, and prove herself to be entitled to the same."

"I will accomplish the mission which you confided to me," said the priest.

"It is not the last, M. l'Abbe."

"So much the better, if the others resemble this; for without wishing to seek for the motives which impel it, I am always touched by a voluntary restitution. These lofty acts, which conscience alone dictates, are always the indications of sincere repentance, and it is no barren expiation."

"In truth, M. l'Abbe, to restore a hundred thousand francs at once is rare; as for me, I have been more curious than you; but what availed my curiosity against the unshaken discretion of Jacques? Thus, I am still ignorant of the person's name who has made this noble restitution."

"Whoever he may be," said the abbe, "I am certain that he stands very high in the esteem of M. Ferrand."

"This honest man is indeed, M. l'Abbe, placed very high in my esteem," answered the notary, with a bitterness badly disguised.

"And this is not all, M. l'Abbe," said Polidori, looking at Jacques Ferrand in a significant manner; "you will see how far these generous scruples of this unknown extend; and, if I must speak plainly, I suspect our friend of having contributed not a little to awaken these scruples, and of having found the means to calm them."

"How is that?" asked the priest.

"What do you mean to say?" added the notary.

"And the Morels? this good and virtuous family?"

"Ah! yes, yes; in truth, I forgot," said Jacques Ferrand, in a hollow voice.

"Imagine, M. l'Abbe," resumed Polidori, "that the author of this restitution, without doubt advised by Jacques Ferrand, not content with restoring this considerable sum, wishes still—but I will leave my worthy friend to explain; it is a pleasure of which I will not deprive him."

"I listen to you, my dear M. Ferrand," said the priest.

"You know," said Jacques Ferrand, with involuntary emotions of revolt against the part which was imposed on him — feelings which were betrayed by the alteration of his voice and the hesitancy of his speech; "you know, M. l'Abbe, that the misconduct of Louise Morel was such a terrible blow for her father, that he has become mad. The numerous family of the artisan ran the risk of dying from want, deprived of their sole support. Happily, Providence has come to their succour; and the person who has made the voluntary restitution of which you are the agent, M. l'Abbe, has not thought this a sufficient expiation for a great abuse of confidence. He asked me if I did not know any deserving family in want of assistance. I mentioned the Morels, and he begged me, at the same time giving me the necessary funds, which I will hand to you presently, to request you to settle an annuity of two thousand francs on Morel, revertible to his wife and children."

"But, in truth," said the abbe, "in accepting this new charge, doubtless very responsible, I am astonished that it was not bestowed on you."

"The unknown person has thought, and I coincide with him, that his good works would acquire an additional value, would be, thus to speak, sanctified by passing through hands as pious as yours, M. l'Abbe."

"To that I have nothing to answer; I will purchase an annuity of two thousand francs for Morel, the worthy and unfortunate father of Louise. But I think with your friend here that you have not been a stranger to the resolution which has dictated this new expiatory gift."

"I have pointed out the Morel family, nothing more; I beg you to believe me, M. l'Abbe," answered Jacques Ferrand.

"Now," said Polidori, "you are going to see, M. l'Abbe, what noble philanthropic views my friend Jacques has concerning the charitable establishment of which we have already had some conversation; he is going to read to you the plan which he has definitively arranged; the money necessary for the capital is there in the chest; but, since yesterday, he has had some scruples, and if he does not mention them to you, I will do it for him."

"It is useless," replied Jacques Ferrand, who sometimes chose rather to wound his feelings by his own words than to submit in silence to the ironical praises of his tormentor. "Here is the fact, M. l'Abbe. I have thought that it would be more modest—more Christian-like, that this establishment should not be instituted in my name."

"But this humility is overstrained," cried the abbe. "You can—you ought to pride yourself on your charitable investment. It is right, almost a duty, for you to attach your name to it."

"I prefer, M. l'Abbe, to preserve the incognito: I am resolved on it; and I count on your kindness to make all the necessary arrangements, and select the inferior officers of the establishment; I reserve alone for myself the nomination of the director and porter."

"Even if it were not a real pleasure for me to assist you in your good works, it would be my duty to accept the office."

"Now, M. l'Abbe, if you will allow it, my friend will read you the plan decided upon."

"Since you are so obliging, *my friend*," said Jacques Ferrand, with bitterness, "read it yourself. Spare me this trouble, I pray you."

"No, no," answered Polidori, casting a look at the notary which he well understood, "it gives me great pleasure to hear from your own lips the noble sentiments which have guided you in this work of philanthropy."

"So be it—I will read," said the notary, hastily, taking up a paper which lay upon his desk.

Polidori, for a long time the accomplice of Jacques Ferrand, knew the crimes and secret thoughts of the scoundrel; hence he could not suppress a malicious smile on seeing him forced to read this paper, dictated by Rudolf. As will be seen, the prince showed himself inexorable in the logical manner with which he punished the notary.

Lustful—he tortured him by lust.

Covetous—by covetousness.

Hypocritical—by hypocrisy.

For Rudolf had chosen this venerable abbe to be the agent for the restitutions and expiations imposed on Jacques Ferrand, because he wished doubly to punish him for having, by his detestable hypocrisy, obtained the esteem and affection of the good priest. Was it not in effect, a great punishment for this hideous impostor—this hardened criminal, to be constrained to practise, at length, the Christian virtues which he had so often feigned to possess, and this time *really* to deserve the just eulogiums of a respectable priest who had been his dupe?

Jacques Ferrand read the following note with feelings easily imagined.

"*Establishment of the Bank for Workmen out of work.*

'Love ye one another.'

"These divine words contain the germ of all duties, all virtues, all charities.

"They have inspired the humble founder of this Institution.

"To God alone belong the benefits it may confer.

"Limited, as to the means of action, the

founder has wished that the greatest number possible of his brothers should participate in the succour offered.

"He addresses himself, in the first place, to honest, industrious workmen, with families, whom the want of work often reduces to the most cruel extremities.

"It is not a degrading alms which he gives to his brothers, but a gratuitous loan which he offers.

"May this loan, as he hopes, prevent them often from resorting to those cruel pledges which they are forced to make (while awaiting the return of work), for the purpose of sustaining a family of which they are the sole support.

"The only guarantee for this loan which he demands from his brothers, is their oath and honour.

"It has a revenue of twelve thousand francs, which will be loaned without interest to workmen with families and out of work, in sums of twenty to forty francs.

"These loans shall only be made to working men or women who shall bring a certificate of good conduct from their last employer, stating the cause and date of the suspension of employment.

"These loans will be repaid monthly by sixths or twelfths, at the choice of the borrower, commencing from the day on which he finds employment.

"He will subscribe a simple engagement of honour to reimburse the loan at stated periods.

"To this will be added, as endorsers, the names of two of his companions.

"The workman who shall not reimburse the amount borrowed by him, cannot, he or his endorsers, have any claims for a new loan; for he will have forfeited a sacred engagement, and, above all, deprived several of his brothers of the advantages which he has enjoyed.

"The sums loaned, on the contrary, being scrupulously repaid, the same benefit can be bestowed on others.

"Not to degrade man by alms.

"Not to encourage idleness by a fruitless charity.

"To stimulate sentiments of honour and innate probity among the labouring classes.

"To come in a brotherly manner to the aid of the workman, who, living already with difficulty from day to day, cannot, when no work can be procured, *suspend* his wants or those of his family, because his work is suspended.

"Such are the thoughts which have given rise to this institution.

"May he who has said, 'Love ye one another,' be glorified."

"Oh! sir," cried the abbe, with religious admiration, "what a charitable idea! how easily I can comprehend your emotion on reading these lines of such touching simplicity."

In truth, while finishing this reading, the voice of Jacques Ferrand was broken, his impatience and temper were at an end; but, watched by Polidori, he dared not, could not transgress the least orders of Rudolf. Let his rage be imagined at being forced to dispose so liberally of his fortune in favour of a class whom he had so unmercifully persecuted in the person of Morel the lapidary.

"Is not the idea excellent, M. l'Abbe?" asked Polidori.

"Oh, sir, I, who sm acquainted with all kinds of poverty, can comprehend better than any one, of what importance this loan would be to poor and honest workmen without employ. Indigence without employment never finds credit, or, if obtainable, it is at a most usurious rate; they will lend thirty sous at eight days, and then forty must be returned; and even these loans are very difficult to be obtained; those from the pawnbrokers cost often near three hundred per cent. The artisan without work often pledges for forty sous the only covering which, during the nights of winter, defends him and his from the rigour of the cold. But," added the abbe, with enthusiasm, "a loan of thirty or forty francs without interest, and reimbursable by twelfths, when work returns—for honest workmen, it is their safety, it is hope, it is life. And with what fidelity they would pay it back! It is a sacred debt, which they have contracted to give bread to their wives and children!"

"How precious the eulogiums of M. l'Abbe must be to you, Jacques," said Polidori; "and how many more will he pronounce when he hears of your establishment of a Feeless Pawnbroker's."

"How?"

"Certainly, M. l'Abbe, Jacques has not forgotten this; it is a kind of appendage to his Bank for the Poor."

"Can it be true?" cried the priest, clasping his hands with admiration.

"Continue, Jacques," said Polidori.

The notary proceeded to read with a rapid voice, for the whole scene was odious and hateful to him.

"These loans have for their object the remedy for one of the gravest incidents in the life of a labourer—intermission of work. They shall therefore be granted only to those out of employment.

"But it remains to provide for the other cruel embarrassments, which reach even those with employment.

"Often, the loss of one or two days, caused sometimes by fatigue, by the attention necessary to bestow on a wife or sick child, deprives the workman of his daily resources. Then he has recourse to the pawnbroker's, or to unlawful lenders of money, at an enormous rate of interest.

"Wishing, as much as possible, to lighten the burden of his brothers, the founder of the Bank for the Poor sets apart an income of twenty-five thousand francs a year, for the purpose of lending on pledges, not to exceed the amount of ten francs for each loan.

"The borrowers will pay neither costs nor interest, but they must prove that they follow an honourable profession, and produce a decla-

ration from their employers, which will prove their morality.

"At the end of two years, the articles which have not been redeemed will be sold, without costs; the proceeds arising from the surplus of this sale shall be placed, at five per cent. interest, to the profit of the owners.

"At the end of five years, if this sum shall not be reclaimed, it shall be added to the Bank for the Poor.

"The administration and the office of said Bank shall be placed in the Rue du Temple, No. 17, in a house bought for this purpose, in the centre of that most populous quarter. A revenue of ten thousand francs shall be appropriated to the expenses and to the administration of the Bank for the Poor, of which the director for life shall be—"

Polidori interrupted the notary, and said to the priest, "You will see, M. l'Abbe, by the choice of the director of this establishment, whether Jacques knows how to repair the wrong which he has involuntarily done. You know that by an error which he deplores, he had falsely accused his cashier of taking a sum which he afterward discovered."

"Doubtless."

"Well! it is to this honest young man, Francois Germain, that Jacques assigns the life governorship of this bank, with a salary of four thousand francs. Is it not admirable, M. l'Abbe?"

"Nothing astonishes me now, or, rather, nothing has astonished me," said the priest. "The fervent piety, the virtues of our worthy friend could hardly fail of such a result. To consecrate all his fortune to such an institution —ah! it is admirable!"

"More than a million, M. l'Abbe," said Polidori—"more than a million, amassed by dint of order, economy, and probity; and yet there are those who accuse Jacques of avarice! How, said they, his office brings him in fifty or sixty thousand francs a year, and he lives like a miser?"

"To such as these," replied the abbe, with enthusiasm, "I would answer: During fifteen years he has lived like a poor man, in order to be able at the present time magnificently to solace the poor."

"Be, then, at least proud and joyous at the good you have done," cried Polidori, addressing Jacques Ferrand, who, gloomy and cast down, seemed absorbed in profound meditation.

"Alas!" said the abbe, sadly, "it is not in this world that one receives the recompense of so many virtues; he has a more exalted ambition."

"Jacques," said Polidori, touching the notary lightly on the shoulder, "finish your reading." The notary started passed his hand over his face, and said to the priest,

"Pardon, M. l'Abbe, but I was thinking—I was thinking of the immense extension that this bank for the poor might have from the returned loans. If the loans of each year were regularly repaid at the end of four years, it would have already loaned about fifty thousand crowns on pledge or gratuitously. It is enormous—enormous; and I felicitate myself on it," he added, thinking of the value of the sacrifice imposed upon him. He resumed: "I was, I believe, at—"

"At the nomination of Francois Germain, for director of the bank," said Polidori.

Jacques Ferrand continued:

"A revenue of ten thousand francs shall be set aside for the expenses and administration of the bank for the poor without work, of which the perpetual director shall be Francois Germain, and the porter and keeper shall be the present porter of the house, named Pipelet.

"M. l'Abbe Dumont, with whom the funds necessary for this undertaking shall be deposited, will form a superior council of supervision, composed of the mayor and the justice of the peace of the ward, who will add to their number the persons whose assistance they shall consider useful to the extension of the Bank for the Poor; for the founder will esteem himself a thousand times paid for the little that he has done if some charitable person will aid in the work.

"The opening of this bank will be announced by every means of publicity possible.

"The founder repeats, in conclusion, that he takes no credit for what he has done for his brothers.

"His sole thought is but the echo of this Divine command:

"'Love ye one another.'

"And your place above shall be assigned to you beside him who hath pronounced the immortal words," cried the abbe, pressing with much warmth the hands of Jacques Ferrand in his own.

The notary was overpowered. Without replying to the encomiums of the abbe, he hastened to give him in treasury bonds the considerable sum necessary for the establishment of this institution and for the annuity of Morel the lapidary.

"I dare hope, M. l'Abbe," at length said Jacques Ferrand, "that you will not refuse this new mission confided to your charitable care. Besides, a stranger, called Sir Walter Murphy, who has given me some advice about the drawing up of this project, will partake of your labour, and will visit you to-day to converse with you on the practicability of the plan, and to place himself at your service, if he can be of any use. Except with him, I pray you to preserve the most profound secrecy, M. l'Abbe."

"You are right. God knows what you are doing for your poor brothers. What matters the rest? All my regret is that I have nothing but my zeal to contribute in aid of this most noble institution; it will be, at least, as ardent as your charity is untiring. But what is the matter? You turn pale. Do you suffer?"

"A little, M. l'Abbe. This long reading, the emotions caused by your kind words, the indisposition from which I am suffering. Par-

don my weakness," said Jacques Ferrand, seating himself as if in pain; "there is nothing serious in it, but I am exhausted."

"Perhaps you had better go to bed," said the priest, with an air of lively interest, "and send for your physician?"

"I am a physician, M. l'Abbe," said Polidori. "The situation of Ferrand demands great care; I will give him all my attention." The notary shuddered.

"A little repose will relieve you, I hope," said the cure. "I leave you; but before I go, I wish to give you a receipt for this money. Come, take courage, be of good cheer!" said the priest, handing the receipt, which he wrote at the desk, to Jacques Ferrand. "Farewell: to-morrow I will call and see you again. Adieu, sir—adieu, my friend, my worthy, pious friend!"

The priest went out, and Jacques Ferrand and Polidori remained alone. Hardly had the abbe gone than Jacques Ferrand uttered a terrible imprecation.

His despair and rage, so long restrained, burst forth with fury; breathless, his face convulsed, his eyes rolling in their sockets, he walked up and down in the cabinet like a wild beast confined by a chain.

Polidori, presenting the greatest composure, observed the notary attentively.

"Thunder and blood!" cried Jacques, in a voice choked with rage; "My fortune entirely swallowed up in these stupid good works! I, who despise and execrate men; I, who have only lived to deceive and despoil them; I found philanthropic establishments—to be forced to do it, by infernal means!—But is it the devil, then, who is your master?" he cried with fury, and stopping abruptly before Polidori.

"I have no master," he answered, coldly. "Like you, I have a judge!"

"To obey like a fool the orders of this man!" said Jacques Ferrand, with renewed rage. "And this priest, whom I have so often laughed at, because he was the dupe of my hypocrisy; every one of the praises he gave me was like a thrust with a dagger. And to be compelled—"

"Or the scaffold, as an alternative."

"Oh! not to be able to escape this fatal power! There is more than a million that I have given up. If I have left, with this house, a hundred thousand francs, it is the very outside. What more do they want?"

"You are not at the end yet. The prince knows, through Badinot, that your man of straw, Petit Jean, was only a name borrowed by you for the purpose of making the usurious loans to the Viscount de Saint Remy. The sums which Saint Remy repaid you were loaned to him by a great lady; probably another restitution awaits you; but it stands adjourned, doubtless, because it is a more delicate affair."

"Chained, chained here!"

"As securely as with an iron cable."

"You—my jailer—wretch!"

"What would you have? According to the system of the prince, nothing more logical: he punishes crime by crime, accomplice by accomplice."

"Oh! rage! madness!"

"Oh! unfortunately, powerless rage! for, as long as I am not told, 'Jacques Ferrand is free to quit this house,' I will remain like your shadow. Listen, then; as well as you, I merit the scaffold. If I fail to execute the orders given to me, my head falls. You cannot, then, have a more incorruptible guardian. As for flying, both of us—impossible; we could not take a step outside of this house without falling into the hands of those who are watching it night and day."

"Death and fury, I know it!"

"Be resigned, then, for this flight is impossible; even should we succeed in escaping, it would only make our situation more precarious, for they would send the police in search of us. On the contrary, you, in obeying, and I, in watching the accuracy of your obedience, we are certain of not having our throats cut. Once more, I say, let us be resigned."

"Do not exasperate me by this indifference, or—"

"Or what? I do not fear you: I am on my guard, I am armed; and even if you were to find the poisoned dagger of Cecily to kill me—"

"Be quiet!"

"It would be of no use; you know that every two hours I am obliged to give a bulletin of your precious health, an indirect way of hearing from us both. On not seeing me appear, they will suspect you of the murder; you will be arrested. And—but hold—I do you an injury in supposing you capable of this crime. You have sacrificed a million to save your life, and you would not risk your head for the foolish and fruitless vengeance of killing me! Come, come, you are not fool enough for that."

"It is because you know I cannot kill you that you increase my torments by your sarcasms."

"Your position is so original, you do not see it yourself; but on my honour, it is enjoyable!"

"Oh misfortune! misfortune irretrievable! on whatever side I turn it is death! And what I most dread now, is destruction! Curses on myself, on you, on the whole world!"

"Your misanthropy is more extensive than your philanthropy. The former embraces the whole world; the latter but one of the wards of Paris."

"Go on—rail, monster!"

"Would you prefer that I should crush you with reproaches?"

"Whose fault is it that we are reduced to this position?"

"Yours. Why preserve around your neck, suspended as a relic, that letter of mine relative to the murder which was worth a hundred thousand crowns to you—the murder which we had so adroitly passed off as a suicide?"

"Why? wretch! Did I not give you fifty thousand francs for your co-operation in the crime and for this letter, which I required that

I might have a guarantee against your denouncing me? My life and fortune were, then, dependant on its possession; that is the reason why I always wore it around my neck."

"It is true, it was cunning on your part, for I would gain nothing by denouncing you except the pleasure of going to the scaffold side by side with you. And yet your cunning has ruined us, while mine would have assured impunity for the crime to the present moment."

"Impunity?"

"Who could forsee what has come to pass? But, in the ordinary march of events, our crime would have been unpunished, thanks to me."

"Thanks to you?"

"Yes: when we had blown this man's brains out, you wished simply to counterfeit his signature, and write to his sister that, ruined completely, he had killed himself from despair. You thought that you would make a great stroke of policy by not speaking in this letter of the deposit he had confided to you. It was absurd. This deposit being known to his sister, she would have unquestionably reclaimed it. It was necessary, then, on the contrary, to mention it as we did, in order that, if there were any suspicions of the reality of the suicide, you might be the last person to be suspected. Then what happened? The suicide was believed; from your reputation for probity, you were enabled to deny the deposit, and it was thought that the brother killed himself after having dissipated the fortune of his sister."

"But what matters all this at present? the crime is discovered."

"And thanks to whom? Was it my fault if my letter was a double-edged sword, cutting both ways? How could you be so weak, so stupid, as to deliver such a terrible weapon to this infernal Cecily?"

"Hush—do not pronounce that name!" cried Jacques Ferrand, with a frightful expression.

"So be it: I do not wish to make you epileptic. You will see that, in guarding against ordinary justice, our mutual precautions were sufficient; but the extraordinary justice of him who holds us both in his power defied all calculations.

"Oh! I know it but too well.

"He believes that to cut off the head of a criminal does not sufficiently repair the evil he has done. With the proofs which he holds, if he were to deliver us to the tribunals, what would be the result? Two corpses, at the most only good to fatten the graveyard.

"Oh! yes—it is tears, and anguish, and tortures which this prince demands—this demon. But I do not know him, I have never done him any harm. Why does he pursue me thus?

"In the first place, he pretends to reward the good, and punish the evil done to others; and, besides, he knows those whom you have injured, and he punishes you in his own way."

"But by what right?

"Come, come, Jacques, between us, do not speak of right; he had the power to have your head taken off in a judicial manner. What would have been the result? Your relations are all dead—the state would have profited by your fortune instead of those whom you have despoiled. On the contrary, in redeeming your life at the price of your money, all your victims will be remunerated for their sufferings, in the manner already decided upon. So in this point of view, we can confess to each other that if society would have gained nothing by your death, it gains much by your living."

"And it is this which causes my rage—and this is not my only torture."

"The prince knows it well. Now what will he decide to do with us? I am ignorant. He has promised to spare us our lives if we faithfully obey his orders. He will keep his promise. But if he does not believe our crimes sufficiently expiated, he will know how to make us prefer death a thousand times to the life he grants us. You do not know him. Besides, he has more than one devil in his service—for this Cecily—whom may the thunder blast!"

"Once more, be still—not that name—not that name!"

"Yes, yes! may the thunder blast her who bears that name! it is she who has ruined all. Our heads would now be in security on our shoulders, but for your silly love for this creature."

Instead of storming with rage, Jacques Ferrand answered, with a deep sigh,

"Do you know this woman? speak! Have you ever seen her?"

"Never. They say she is beautiful."

"Beautiful!" answered the notary, shrugging his shoulders. "Hold!" he added, with a kind of bitter desperation: "be still! do not speak of what you do not know. Do not accuse me. What I have done, you would have done in my place."

"I! place my life at the mercy of a woman!"

"Of that one—yes—and I would do it again!"

"By Jove! he is still under the charm," cried Polidori, amazed.

"Listen," answered the notary, in a low, calm voice, "listen: you know if I love gold? you know what I have braved to acquire it? To reckon up the sums I possessed, to see them doubled by my avarice, to endure every privation, and know myself the master of a treasure—it was my joy, my happiness. Yes, to possess, not to enjoy, but to theorize, was my life. One month since, if they had said to me, 'Between your fortune and your head choose,' I would have given up my head."

"But of what use to have money when one dies?"

"Ask me, then, Of what use to possess it, when one makes no use of what one possesses? I, a millionaire, did I lead the life of a millionaire? No: I lived like a poor beggar. I loved, then, to possess, for possession's sake."

"But, once more I ask of you, of what use is it when one dies?"

"To the possessing! Yes, to enjoy that even to the last moment for which you have braved privations, infamy, the scaffold: yes, to say

once more, the head under the axe, I possess!! Oh! do you see, death is sweet compared to the torments that are endured on seeing one's self during life dispossessed, as I am, of all that I have amassed at the price of so much pain, so much danger! Oh! to say, at each moment of the day, 'I, who had more than a million—I, who have endured every privation to preserve it—I, who, in ten years, would have doubled it, tripled it—I have no longer anything.' It is cruel! it is to die, not each day, but each moment of the day. Yes, to this horrible agony, which may endure for years, perhaps, I would have preferred death a thousand times. Once more, I could have said in dying, I possess."

Polidori looked at his accomplice with profound astonishment.

"I cannot comprehend you. Then why have you obeyed the commands of him who might have caused your head to roll from the scaffold? Why have you preferred life, without your treasure, if this life seems so horrible to you?"

"It is, do you see," answered the notary, in a voice sunk to a whisper, "it is not the thought of death—it is annihilation. And Cecily!"

"And you hope?" cried Polidori, astonished.

"I hope not: I possess—"

"What?"

"The remembrance."

"But you will never see her again: she has delivered up your head!"

"But I love her still, and more madly than ever," cried Jacques Ferrand, with an explosion of tears, of sobs, which strangely contrasted with the calmness of his last works. "Yes, I love her always, and I do not wish to die, so that I can plunge myself deeper and deeper with wild delight into this furnace where I am consumed by inches. For you do not know—that night—that night in which I saw her so beautiful—that night is always present to my thoughts—that picture of voluptuousness is there, there—always there—before my eyes. Let them be open or shut, in feverish weakness or burning watchfulness, I see her black eyes and inflaming glances, which boil the marrow of my bones. I feel her breath upon my face—I hear her voice."

"But these are frightful torments!"

"Frightful! aye, frightful! But death! but annihilation! but to lose for ever this remembrance, as vivid as reality; but to renounce these recollections, which torture me, devour me, and consume me! No! no! no! Live! live—poor, despised, scorned—live in the galleys, but live? so that thought remains—since this infernal creature has all my thought—is all my thought!"

"Jacques," said Polidori, in a grave tone, which strangely contrasted with his habitual bitter irony, "I have seen much suffering, but never tortures that approached yours. He who holds us in his power could not have been more unmerciful. He has condemned you to live—or, rather, to await death in terrible agonies—for this avowal explains to me the alarming symptoms which every day develop in you, and of which I sought in vain the cause."

"But these symptoms are nothing serious! It is exhaustion; it is the reaction of my sorrows! I am not in danger. Is it not so?"

"No, no; but your position is a critical one; you must not make it worse. Certain thoughts must be driven away, otherwise you run great risk."

"I will do what you wish, so I may live, for I do not wish to die. Oh! the priests talk of the damned! never could one imagine for them a punishment equal to mine. Tortured by passion and avarice, I have two bleeding wounds instead of one, and I feel both of them equally. The loss of my gold is frightful to me, but death would be more frightful still. I wish to live; my life may be a torture without end, and I dare not call upon death, for death annihilates my fatal happiness, this phantom of my thoughts, in which Cecily constantly appears."

"You have at least the consolation," said Polidori, resuming his usual calmness, "of thinking upon the good that you have done in expiation of your crimes."

"Yes, rail—you are right; turn me over on the burning coals. You know well, wretch, that I hate humanity; you know well that these expiations which are imposed upon me, only inspire me with hatred against those who oblige me to act thus, and against those who profit by it. Thunder and blood! To think that, while I drag along a frightful life, these men whom I execrate have their misery solaced; that this widow and her daughter will thank God for the fortune I restore them—that this Morel and his daughter will live in ease and comfort—that this Germain will have an honourable situation assured to him for life! And this priest! this priest, who blessed me when my heart was swimming in gall and blood—I could have stabbed him! Oh! it is too much! No! no!" he cried, covering his face with his hands; "my head bursts—my ideas are confused—I cannot resist such attacks of impotent rage! And all this for you! Cecily! Cecily! do you know how much I suffer? do you know, Cecily—demon—brought up from below!"

Ferrand, exhausted by this frightful raving, fell back foaming on his chair, and threw his arms wildly about, uttering hollow and inarticulate sounds.

This fit of convulsive and despairing rage by no means astonished Polidori.

Possessing a consummate medical experience, he at once saw that Ferrand's anguish at seeing himself dispossessed of his fortune, joined to his passion for Cecily, had lighted up the flames of a devouring fever.

Suddenly, some one knocked hurriedly at the door of the cabinet.

"Jacques!" said Polidori, to the notary; "Jacques! recover yourself; here is some one."

The notary did not hear him. Half lying on his desk, he writhed with convulsive spasms.

Polidori went to open the door, and saw the head clerk, who, pale and alarmed, cried,

"I must speak at once to M. Ferrand."

"Silence! he is at this moment lying ill; he cannot understand you," said Polidori, in a whisper; and coming out from the cabinet, he closed the door after him.

"Oh! sir," cried the clerk, "you are the best friend of M. Ferrand's; come to his assistance; there is not a moment to be lost."

"What do you mean?"

"I went, according to the orders of M. Ferrand, to tell the Countess M'Gregor that he could not visit her to-day as she desired."

"Well?"

"This lady, who appears to be now out of danger, made me come into her room. She cried, in a threatening tone, 'Return, and tell M. Ferrand that if he is not here in an hour he shall be arrested for forgery, for the child which he pretended was dead is yet alive. I know to whom he delivered her—I know where she is.'" *

"The woman is crazy," answered Polidori, coldly, shrugging his shoulders.

"You think so, sir."

"I am sure of it."

"I thought so at first; but the assertions of her ladyship."

"Her head, doubtless, has been weakened by illness, and visionaries always believe in their visions."

"I ought to tell you also, sir, that at the moment when I left the chamber of the countess, one of her women entered precipitately, saying, 'His highness will be here in an hour!'"

"It is the prince," thought Polidori. "He at the house of the Countess Sarah whom he was never to see again! I do not know wherefore, but I do not like this meeting; it may make our position worse." Then turning to the clerk, he said, "Once more I repeat that this is nothing. I will, however, inform M. Ferrand of what you have just related to me."

CHAPTER XIV.

RUDOLF AND SARAH.

We will conduct the reader to the Countess's, whom a salutary crisis had snatched from the delirium and sufferings which, during several days, had caused the most serious fears for her life.

The day began to close. Sarah, seated in a large arm-chair, and supported by her brother, Thomas Seyton, was attentively surveying herself in a mirror, which was held by one of her women kneeling before her.

This scene passed in the saloon where La Chouette had made her murderous attempt.

The countess was as pale as marble, which gave a bolder relief to her dark eyes and hair; an ample white muslin wrapper completely concealed her form.

"Give me the coral coronet," she said to one of her women, in a weak but imperious voice."

"Betty will fasten it," said Thomas Seyton; "you will fatigue yourself; you are already so imprudent."

"The coral!" repeated she, impatiently, as she took the jewel and placed it on her brow. "Now fasten it, and leave me," she added, to her women.

As they were retiring she said,

"Let them show M. Ferrand into the little blue saloon; and," she continued, with an expression of ill-concealed pride, "as soon as his serene highness the Grand-duke of Gerolstein arrives, he must be ushered in here.

"At length," said Sarah, throwing herself back in her chair as soon as she was alone with her brother, "at length I touch this crown—the dream of my life! The prediction is about to be accomplished!"

"Sarah, calm your emotion," said her brother, earnestly. "Yesterday they still despaired of your life; disappointment now might cause a relapse."

"You are right, Tom. The fall would be dreadful, for my hopes have never been nearer being realized than now! I am certain that what has prevented me from sinking under my sufferings has been my constant hope to profit by the important revelation which this woman made me at the moment when she stabbed me."

"Even during your delirium you constantly referred to this idea."

"Because this idea alone sustained my flickering life. What a hope! Sovereign princess! almost a queen," she added, with rapture.

"Once more, Sarah, no mad dreams; the awakening will be terrible."

"Mad dreams? How! when Rudolf shall know that this young girl, now a prisoner at Saint Lazare, is our child, do you think that—"

Seyton interrupted his sister:

"I believe," he replied, with bitterness, "that princes place reasons of state and political proprieties, before natural ties."

"Do you count so little on my address?"

"The prince is not the same fond and enamoured youth whom you seduced in days gone by."

"Do you know why I have wished to ornament my hair with this band of coral? and why I have put on this white robe? It is because, the first time Rudolf saw me at the court of Gerlostein, I was dressed in white, and I wore the same band of coral in my hair."

"How!" said Thomas Seyton, looking at his sister with surprise; "you wish to evoke these memories; do you not, on the contrary, dread their influence?"

"I know Rudolf better than you. Doubtless, my features, now changed by age and sufferings, are no longer those of the young girl of sixteen he so wildly loved—whom he has alone loved—for I was his first love. And this love, unique in the life of man, leaves always in his

* The reader will remember that the countess thought Fleur de Marie was still at Saint Lazare, according to La Chouette's account.

heart ineffaceable traces. Believe me, brother, the sight of this ornament will awaken in Rudolf, not only the memories of his love, but also those of his youth; and to men the recollection of their first emotions is always sweet and precious."

"But to these soft memories are joined others of terrible import. Do you forget the fatal termination of your love? The conduct of the prince's father towards you? Your obstinate silence when Rudolf, after your marriage with Earl M'Gregor, demanded your child, then quite an infant? your daughter, of whose death, ten years before, you informed him in a cold letter? Do you forget that since that time the prince has only felt for you contempt—hatred?"

"Pity has taken the place of hatred. Since he has known that I was in a dying state, each day has he sent Baron de Graun to make inquiries."

"From humanity."

"Just now he answered my note; said that he would come here. This concession is immense, my brother."

"He believes you dying. He supposes that he is coming to take a last farewell. You were wrong not to write to him what you are now about to disclose."

"I know why I act thus. This revelation will fill him with surprise and joy, and I shall be present to profit by his first burst of tenderness. To-day, or never, he shall say to me, 'A marriage would make the birth of our child legitimate.' If he says so, his word is sacred, and the hope of all my life will at length be realized."

"If he makes you this promise—yes."

At this moment was heard the noise of a carriage which entered the courtyard.

"It is he—it is Rudolph," cried Sarah.

"Yes, it is the prince, he is getting out of the carriage."

"Leave me alone—this is the decisive moment," said Sarah, with immovable self-control; for a towering ambition and unbounded selfishness had always been and still were the ruling motives of this woman.

After a momentary hesitation, Thomas Seyton drew near to his sister and said,

"It is I who will inform the prince how your daughter has been saved; this interview will be too dangerous for you; a violent emotion would kill you."

"Your hand, my brother," said Sarah.

Then placing on her impassable heart the hand of Seyton, she added with a forced and icy smile,

"Am I agitated?"

"No, in truth, not at all," said Seyton, with surprise; "I know what command you have over yourself. But at such a moment—wherefore you will be decided—a crown—or death—your calmness absolutely confounds me."

"Why this astonishment, my brother? did you not know that nothing—no, nothing has ever caused this marble heart to quicken its pulsations? it will only palpitate when I shall feel placed on my brow the sovereign crown. I hear Rudolf—leave me."

"But—"

"Leave me," cried Sarah, in a tone so imperious, so resolute, that her brother left the apartment some moments before the prince was introduced. When Rudolf entered the saloon, his countenance expressed pity; but seeing the countess seated in the chair decked with her jewels, he drew back with surprise, and his physiognomy became immediately sombre and suspicious.

The countess, divining his thoughts, said to him in a soft and feeble voice, "You thought to find me dying: you came to receive my last farewell!"

"I have always regarded as sacred the last wishes of the dying, but it appears I have been deceived."

"Reassure yourself," said Sarah, interrupting Rudolf, "I have not deceived you; there remain for me but a few hours to live. Pardon me a last act of coquetry; I wished to spare you the usual attendants of a deathbed. I wished to die dressed as I was the first time I saw you. Alas! after ten years of separation, I see you again! Thanks—oh, thanks! But in your turn, render thanks to heaven for having moved you to come to listen to my last prayer. If you had refused me, I had carried with me to the tomb a secret which is going to make the joy, the happiness of your life. Joy mixed with some tears, like all other human felicity; but this felicity! you would buy it at the price of half the remaining days of your life!"

"What do you mean to say?" demanded the prince, with surprise.

"Yes, Rudolf, if you had not come, this secret would have followed me to the tomb—it had been my sole vengeance; and yet—no, no, I should not have had this terrible courage. Although you would have caused me much suffering, I should have divided with you this supreme happiness, which, more fortunate than I, you will a long time enjoy."

"But, once more, madame, what means all this?"

"When you know it, you will comprehend my delay in informing you, for you will regard this revelation as a miracle from heaven. But, strange thought—I, who with one word can cause you the greatest happiness that you have ever experienced—I feel, although now the minutes of my life are counted—I feel an indescribable satisfaction in prolonging your suspense; and, besides, I know your heart, and, in spite of the firmness of your character, I should fear to announce to you, without preparation, a discovery so incredible. The emotions of sudden joy have also their dangers."

"Your pallor increases—you with difficulty restrain a violent agitation," said Rudolf; "all this proves that something grave and important—"

"Grave and important!" repeated Sarah, in

a faltering voice, for, notwithstanding her habitual immobility, in reflecting upon the immense importance of the revelation she was about to make to Rudolf, she felt herself more agitated than she could have thought possible. After a moment's silence, Sarah, no longer able to restrain herself, cried,

"Rudolf, our child is not dead."

"Our child!"

"I tell you, she lives!"

These words, the accent of truth with which they were pronounced, moved the prince to the very bottom of his heart. "Our child!" he repeated, advancing hastily towards Sarah; "our child! my daughter!"

"She is not dead; I have certain proofs; I know where she is—to-morrow you shall see her."

"My daughter! my child!" repeated Rudolf, as if in a dream; "can it be possible? she is alive!"

Then suddenly reflecting on the great improbability of this relation, and fearing to be the dupe of Sarah, he cried, "No, no; it is a dream! it is impossible! you deceive me; it is some unworthy deceit!"

"Rudolf, listen to me!"

"No, I know your ambition—I know of what you are capable: I can fathom the object of this fabrication!"

"Well! you speak the truth. I am capable of everything. Yes, I did wish to deceive you. Yes, some days before I received my mortal wound I did wish to find a young girl, whom I would have presented to you in the place of our child whom you regret so bitterly."

"Enough—oh! enough, madame."

"After this confession you will believe me, perhaps; or, rather, you will be forced to give credence to the proofs."

"To the proofs?"

"Yes, Rudolf: I repeat it, I have wished to deceive you, to substitute an obscure girl in the place of her we mourn; but Heaven willed that, at the moment when I was about to carry the project into execution, I should be stricken down."

"You! at this moment!"

"Heaven has also willed that they should propose to me to play this part—do you know whom? our daughter."

"Are you delirious? In the name of Heaven—"

"I am not delirious, Rudolf. In this casket, among some papers and a portrait, which will prove to you the truth of what I say, you will find a paper stained with my blood."

"With your blood!"

"The woman who informed me that our child was still living dictated to me this revelation—then I was stabbed by a poignard."

"And who was she? how did she know?"

"It was to her our child was delivered—quite an infant—after having falsely reported her death."

"But this woman—her name? can she be believed? where did you become acquainted with her?"

"I tell you, Rudolf, that all this is fate—providential. Some months since, you rescued a poor girl from poverty, to send her to the country—is it not so?"

"Yes, to Bouqueval."

"Jealousy and hatred drove me wild. I caused this young girl to be carried off by the woman of whom I have spoken."

"And she took the unhappy child to Saint Lazare?"

"Where she yet is."

"She is there no longer. Ah! you do not know, madame, the frightful evil you have caused by tearing this poor child from the retreat where I had placed her; but—"

"The girl no longer at Saint Lazare?" cried the lady in alarm; "and you speak of a frightful evil!"

"A monster of cupidity had an interest in her death. They have drowned her, madame; but answer, you say—"

"My daughter!" cried Sarah, interrupting Rudolf, and rising on her feet, immovable as a marble statue.

"What does she say? good Heavens!" cried Rudolf.

"My child!" repeated Sarah, whose face became livid and frightful from despair; "they have killed my child!"

"The Goualeuse your child!" repeated Rudolf, recoiling with horror.

"The Goualeuse! yes! that is the name the woman mentioned—this woman called La Chouette. Dead—dead!" cried Sarah, still motionless, her eyes fixed and glaring; "they have killed her!"

"Sarah!" replied Rudolf, as pale and alarmed as she; "calm yourself—answer me—La Goualeuse—this girl whom you caused to be carried off by La Chouette from Bouqueval, was—"

"Our child!"

"She!"

"And they have killed her!"

"Oh! no, no—you rave—this cannot be. You know not, no, you know not how frightful this is. Sarah! compose yourself; speak to me tranquilly. Seat yourself—calm yourself. Often there are appearances—resemblances which deceive; one is inclined to believe what one desires. It is not a reproach I make you; but explain to me well—tell me all the reasons you have to credit this, for it cannot be—no, no! it must not be!—it is not so!"

After a moment's pause, the countess collected her thoughts, and said to Rudolf in an expiring voice,

"Hearing of your marriage, thinking to be married myself, I could not keep our daughter with me; she was then four years old."

"But at this epoch I asked you for her with prayers," cried Rudolf, in a heart-rending tone, "and my letters remained unanswered. The only one you wrote me announced her death!"

"I wished to avenge myself for your contempt by refusing you your child. That was

unworthy; but listen to me: I feel it—my life is drawing to a close; this last blow has overwhelmed me."

"No, no! I do not believe you—I do not wish to believe you! La Goualeuse my child! Oh! you would not have this so!"

"Listen to me, I say. When she was four years old, my brother commissioned Madame Seraphin, widow of one of his old servants, to bring up the child until she was old enough to be placed at school. The sum destined for her future support was placed by my brother with a notary renowned for his probity. The letters of this man, and of Madame Seraphin, addressed at this period to me and my brother, are there, in that casket. At the end of a year they wrote me that the health of my child failed; eight months after, that she was dead; and they sent me the official notification of her decease. At this time, Madame Seraphin entered the service of Jacques Ferrand, after having delivered our child to La Chouette by the hands of a wretch now in the galleys at Rochefort. I began to write this confession of La Chouette when she wounded me. This paper is there with a portrait of our daughter at the age of four years. Examine all—letters, confession, portrait—and you, who have seen her—this unfortunate child—judge."

At these words, which exhausted her strength, Sarah fell back almost lifeless in her chair.

Rudolf was thunderstruck at this revelation.

There are some misfortunes so unlooked for, so horrible, that we are unwilling to believe them until compelled by overwhelming evidence. Rudolf, persuaded of the death of Fleur de Marie, had but one hope left, which was to convince himself that she was not his child.

With a frightful calmness, which alarmed Sarah, he approached the table, opened the casket, and fell to reading the letters one by one, and examining, with scrupulous attention, the papers which accompanied them.

These letters, stamped at the postoffice, written to Sarah and her brother by the notary and by Madame Seraphin, related to the childhood of Fleur de Marie, and to the investment of the funds destined for her support. Rudolf could not doubt the authenticity of this correspondence.

The confession of La Chouette was confirmed by the information obtained (of which we have spoken at the commencement of this story) by order of Rudolf, which pointed out a man named Pierre Tournemine, a prisoner at Rochefort, as the man who had received Fleur de Marie from Madame Seraphin to deliver her to La Chouette—to La Chouette, whom the unfortunate child herself had recognised before Rudolf, at the tapis-franc of the Ogresse.

Rudolf could no longer doubt the identity of these persons and of the Goualeuse.

The official notice concerning her death appeared in conformity to law; but Ferrand had himself acknowledged to Cecily that this forged notice had served for the spoliation of a considerable sum formerly settled as an annuity on the girl whom he had caused to be drowned by Nicholas Martial, by the Ravageurs' Island.

It was, then, with growing and alarming anguish that Rudolf acquired, in spite of himself, the terrible conviction that the Goualeuse was his daughter, and that she was dead.

Unfortunately for him, all seemed to confirm this belief. Before condemning Jacques Ferrand on the proofs given by the notary himself to Cecily, the prince, in his deep interest for the Goualeuse, having caused inquiries to be made at Asnieres, had learned that, in fact, two women, one old and the other young, and dressed in a peasant's costume, had been drowned in going to Ravageurs' Island, and that rumour accused the Martials of this new crime.

Here we must state that, in spite of the attention of Doctor Griffon, of the Count de Saint Remy, and of La Louve, Fleur de Marie, for a long time in a desperate situation, had hardly become convalescent, and that her weakness, mental and physical, was such, that she had not been able up to this time to inform Madame Georges or Rudolf of her position.

This concourse of circumstances could not leave the slightest hope to the prince

A last proof was reserved for him.

At length he cast his eyes on the miniature, which he had almost feared to look at.

The blow was frightful.

In this infantine and charming face, already radiant with that divine beauty which belongs to the cherubims, he recognised in a striking manner the features of Fleur de Marie: her Grecian nose, her noble forehead, her little mouth, already slightly serious. For, said Madame Seraphin to Sarah, in one of her letters which Rudolf had just read, "The child asks always for its mother, and is very sad."

There were her large blue eyes, of a blue so pure and soft; the blue-bell's blue, as La Chouette had said to Sarah on recognising in this miniature the features of the unfortunate child, whom she had persecuted, in her infancy, under the name of Pegriotte, and as a young girl, under the name of La Goualeuse.

At the sight of this miniature, Rudolf's tumultuous and violent feelings were stifled by his tears.

He fell back, heart-broken, on a chair, and concealed his face in his hands, sobbing convulsively.

CHAPTER XV.

VENGEANCE.

WHILE Rudolf wept bitterly, the features of Sarah changed perceptibly.

At the moment when she thought she was about to realize the dream of her ambitious life, the last hope, which had until now sustained her, was crushed for ever.

This dreadful disappointment could not fail

to have on her health, momentarily ameliorated, a mortal reaction.

Fallen back in her chair, trembling with a feverish agitation, her hands crossed and clasped on her knees, her eyes fixed, the countess awaited with alarm the first word from Rudolf. Knowing the impetuous character of the prince, she feared that the sad grief, which drew so many tears from this inflexible and resolute man, would be succeeded by some terrible transports of passion.

Suddenly Rudolf raised his head, wiped away his tears, arose, and approached Sarah, his arms crossed on his bosom, his manner menacing and without pity. He looked at her for some moments in silence; then he said, in a hollow voice,

"This ought to be. I have drawn the sword against my father; I am striken in my child. Just punishment of the parricide. Listen to me, madame—"

"Parricide! you! Oh! fatal day; of what are going to inform me?"

"It is necessary that you should know, in this awful moment, all the evils caused by your implacable ambition, by your unbounded selfishness. Do you understand me, woman without heart and without conscience? Do you hear me, unnatural mother?"

"Oh, have pity! Rudolf."

"No pardon for you, who formerly, without pity for a sincere love, coldly trifled, in the furtherance of your execrable pride, with a generous and devoted passion, of which you feigned to partake. No mercy for you, who armed the son against the father! No grace for you, who, instead of watching piously over your child, abandoned her to mercenary hands, in order to satisfy your cupidity by a rich marriage, as you had already served your mad ambition by inciting me to marry you. No mercy for you, who, after having refused me my child, have now caused her death by your unholy deceptions! Maledictions on you—my evil genius, and my family's!"

"Oh! he is without pity! leave me, leave me!"

"You must hear me, I tell you! Do you remember the last day I saw you—it is seventeen years since—you could no longer conceal the fruits of our secret union, which, like you, I believed indissoluble. I knew the inflexible character of my father. I knew what political marriage he projected for me. Braving his indignation, I declared to him that you were my wife before God and before man—that in a short time I should become a father. His anger was terrible; he would not give credence to my marriage—so much deception seemed impossible to him. He threatened me with his displeasure if I allowed myself to speak before him again of such folly. Then I loved you like a madman, dupe of your seductions. I thought that your rigid heart of brass had beaten for me. I answered to my father that I would never have any wife but you. At these words, his anger had no bounds; he called you the most outrageous names; swore that our marriage was null; and that, in order to punish your presumption, he would place you in the pillory. Yielding to my mad passion, to the violence of my temper, I dared to forbid my father, my sovereign, to speak thus of my wife. I dared to threaten him. Exasperated at this insult, my father struck me; rage blinded me. I drew my sword. I threw myself upon him. Except for Sir Walter Murphy who turned aside the blow, I had been a parricide in reality, as I was in intention! Do you hear? parricide! And to defend you—you!"

"Alas! I was ignorant of all this!"

"In vain I have thought my crime expiated; the blow I have received to-day is my punishment."

"But have I not also suffered from the obduracy of your father, who broke our marriage? Why accuse me of not having loved you? when—"

"Why?" cried Rudolf, interrupting Sarah, and casting upon her a glance of withering scorn. "Know it then, and be no more surprised at the horror with which you inspire me. After this fatal scene, in which I had threatened the life of my father, I gave up my sword. I was imprisoned with the greatest secresy. Polidori, through whom our marriage had been concluded, was arrested. He proved that this union was null; that the clergyman was only a mock one; and that you, your brother, and myself had all been deceived. To disarm my father's anger against him, Polidori did more; he gave him one of your letters to your brother, which he had intercepted."

"Heavens! can it be possible?"

"Is my contempt for you explained now?"

"Oh! enough, enough!"

"In this letter you unfolded your ambitious projects with revolting coldness. You treated me with an icy disdain; you sacrificed me to your infernal pride; I was only the instrument by whose means you were to obtain the fulfilment of your destiny. You found that my father lived a very long time."

"Unfortunate that I am? Now I understand all."

"And to defend you, I had threatened the life of my father. When, on the morrow, without addressing me a word of reproach, he showed me this letter—this letter, which in every line revealed the blackness of you heart, I could only fall on my knees and ask for pardon. Since that day I have been pursued by unceasing remorse. Soon I left Germany on a long journey; then commenced the penance which I imposed upon myself. It will only finish with my life. To recompense the good, punish the bad, solace those who suffer, probe all the wounds of humanity, to endeavour to snatch souls from perdition—such is the noble task that I have imposed upon myself."

"It is noble and holy; it is worthy of you."

"If I speak of this vow," replied Rudolf, with as much disdain as bitterness; "of this vow, which I have fulfilled, according to my

power, wherever I have been, it is not to be praised by you. Listen to me, then. Not long since I arrived in France; my sojourn in this country was not to be lost to the expiation. In wishing to assist honest unfortunates, I also wished to know those classes whom poverty crushes, hardens, and depraves, knowing that timely succour and kind words have often saved many a poor wretch from the abyss of despair. In order to be my own judge, I assumed the disguise and language of the people whom I wished to observe. It was on one of these excursions, that, for the first time, I—I met—" Then, as if he recoiled from this terrible revelation, Rudolf added, "No, no, I have not the courage."

"What have you still to inform me?"

"You will only know it too soon; but," said he, with irony, "you feel so lively an interest in the past that I ought to speak to you of events which preceded my return to France. After a long journey, I returned to Germany; I married a Prussian princess. During my absence, you had been driven away from the grand-duchy. Learning that you were married to Earl M'Gregor, I wrote to entreat you to send me my child; you did not reply. In spite of all my efforts, I could never find out where you had sent this unfortunate child. Ten years ago only a letter from you informed me that our child was dead. Alas! would to God that she had then been dead; I should not have known the incurable grief which henceforth will imbitter my life."

"Now," said Sarah, in a feeble voice, "I am no more astonished at the aversion with which I have inspired you, since you have read this letter. I feel it, I shall not survive this last blow. Ah, well! yes; pride and ambition have ruined me! Under the appearance of passion, I concealed a frozen heart. Not knowing what good reason you had to despise and hate me, my foolish hopes were renewed. Since we were both free again, I again believed in this prediction which promised me a crown; and when chance discovered my daughter, I seemed to see in this unhoped-for fortune a providential design!

"Yes; I went so far as to think that your aversion for me would yield to your love for your child; and that you would give me your hand in order to restore her to the rank which was her due."

"Well! let your execrable ambition be then satisfied and punished! Yes, notwithstanding the horror you inspire me with; yes, from attachment—what do I say? from respect for the frightful misfortunes of my child, I should have, although decided to live afterward separated from you—I should have, by a marriage which would legitimate my child, rendered her position as dazzling, as lofty as it had been miserable!"

"I was not deceived, then! Woe! it is too late!"

"Oh! I know it; it is not for the death of your child you weep; it is the loss of that rank which you have pursued with untiring pertinacity! Well! may these infamous regrets be your last punishment!"

"The last; for I shall not survive!"

"But, before you die, you shall know what has been the existence of your child since you abandoned her."

"Poor child! very miserable, perhaps!"

"Do you recollect," said Rudolf, with terrible calmness, "that night when you and your brother followed me to the City?"

"I do recollect; but why this question? your look freezes me."

"On coming from this den, you saw, did you not, at the corner of the wretched streets, some unhappy creatures, who—but no, no—I dare not," said Rudolf, concealing his face in his hands, "I dare not; my words alarm me."

"Me also—they alarm me; what is it now?"

"You have seen them?" resumed Rudolf, with an effort. "You have seen those women, the shame of their sex? Well! among them did you remark a young girl of sixteen? beautiful, oh! beautiful as an angel; a poor child, who, in the midst of the degradation in which she had been plunged, preserved an expression so pure, so virginal, that the robbers and assassins among whom she lived, madame, had given her the name of Fleur de Marie; did you remark this young girl? speak, speak, tender mother."

"No, I did not notice her," said Sarah, almost mechanically.

"Really?" cried Rudolf, with a burst of sardonic laughter. "It is strange. I remarked her on this occasion; listen: well, during one of the excursions of which I have spoken just now, and which then had a double object, I found myself in the City; not far from the den whither you followed me, a man wished to beat one of these unfortunate creatures; I defended her against his brutality. You cannot guess who was this creature; speak, good and provident mother, speak! You do not guess?"

"No, I do not guess. Oh! leave me, leave me!"

"The 'unfortunate' was Fleur de Marie."

"Oh! merciful powers!"

"And you do not guess who was Fleur de Marie, irreproachable mother?"

"Kill me! oh! kill me?"

"She was La Goualeuse—your daughter," cried Rudolf, with a heart-rending emotion. "Yes, this unfortunate, whom I had rescued from the violence of a liberated galley-slave, was my own child—mine—Rudolf of Gerolstein's! Oh! there was something in this encounter with my child, whom I saved without knowing her, something terrible, providential; a recompense for the man who seeks to succour his fellow-men, a punishment for the parricide."

"I die cursed and condemned," murmured Sarah, falling back in her chair, and concealing her face in her hands.

"Then," continued Rudolf, with difficulty restraining his feelings, and wishing, in vain,

to suppress his sobs, which almost choked him, "when I had rescued her from the hands of her assailant, struck with the inexpressible sweetness of her voice, the angelic expression of her features, it had been impossible not to have become interested in her. With what profound emotion have I listened to the touching recital of her life of abandonment, of sorrow, and misery; for, do you see, there have been frightful passages in the life of your daughter, madame.

"Oh! you must know the tortures that your child suffered; yes, my lady, while in the midst of your opulence you were dreaming of a crown, your child—your own little child, covered with rags, went at night to beg in the streets, suffering with cold and hunger. During the winter nights she shivered on a little straw in the corner of a garret, and then, when the horrible woman who abused her was tired of beating the poor little thing, only thinking how she could torture her, do you know what she did, madame? She drew out some of her teeth!"

"Oh! would that I could die! this is bitter agony."

"Listen again. Escaping at length from the hands of La Chouette, wandering without bread, without shelter, hardly eight years of age, she was arrested as a vagabond, and put in prison. Oh! these were the happiest days of you daughter, madame. Yes, in her prison-house, each night she thanked God that she suffered no more from cold and hunger, and was beaten no more. And it was in a prison that she spent the most precious years of a young girl's life, those years which a tender mother always surrounds with so jealous and pious a solicitude; yes, instead of being protected with maternal care, your daughter has only known the brutal indifference of jailers; and then, one day, society, in its cruel carelessness, cast her, innocent and pure, beautiful and ingenuous, into the filth and mire of this great city. Unhappy child, abandoned, without support, without advice, delivered to all the chances of misery and vice! Oh!" cried Rudolf, giving free vent to the sobs which overpowered him; "your heart is hardened, your selfishness cruel, but you would have wept—yes, *you* would have wept, on hearing the touching story of your child. Poor girl! sullied, but not corrupted, still chaste in the midst of this horrible degradation, which was for her a frightful dream; for each word told her horror for the life to which she was so fatally enchained. Oh! if you knew how at each moment were revealed the most adorable instincts—how much goodness—how much touching charity; yes, for it was to relieve an unfortunate more wretched than herself, the poor little thing had spent the little money she had, and which then separated her from the abyss of infamy into which she was plunged. Yes! for the day came—a frightful day—when, without work, without bread, without shelter—horrible women met her, exhausted from weakness—from hunger—and—"

Rudolf could not finish, but cried in a heart-rending voice,

"And this was my daughter! my child!"

"Imprecations on my head!" murmured Sarah, concealing her face in her hands, as if she had feared the light of day.

"Yes," cried Rudolf, "imprecations on you! for it is your abandonment of this child which has caused all these horrors. Maledictions on you! for when, rescuing her from this filth, I had placed her in a peaceful retreat, you had her torn away by your miserable accomplices. Maledictions on you! for this again placed her in the power of Jacques Ferrand."

At this name Rudolf stopped suddenly. He shuddered as if he had pronounced it for the first time.

It was because he now pronounced this name for the first time since he had known that his daughter was the victim of that monster.

The features of the prince assumed then a frightful expression of rage and hatred.

Silent, immovable, he remained, as it were, crushed by this thought—that the murderer of his child still lived.

Sarah, notwithstanding her increasing weakness, was struck by his sinister look; she feared for herself.

"Alas! what is the matter with you?" she murmured, in a trembling voice. "Is it not enough of suffering?"

"No; it is not enough!" said Rudolf, responding to his own thoughts. "I have never before experienced—never! such a desire for vengeance—a thirst for blood—a calm, reflecting rage! When I did not know that one of the victims of the monster was my own child, I said to myself, the death of this man will be sterile, while his life will be fertile, if, to redeem it, he accept the conditions which I impose. To condemn him to be charitable, to expiate his crimes, appeared to me just; and then, life without gold, life without sensuality, would be for him a long and double torture. But it is my child whom he has delivered to all the horrors of infamy and misery! but it is my daughter whom he has murdered! I will kill this man!"

And the prince sprang towards the door.

"Where are you going? Do not abandon me!" cried Sarah, half rising, and extending towards Rudolf her supplicating hands. "Do not leave me alone! I am dying!"

"Alone! no! no! I leave you with the spectre of your daughter, whose death you have caused!"

Sarah, frantic, threw herself on her knees, uttering a cry of affright, as if an alarming phantom had appeared to her.

"Pity! I die!"

"Die, then, accursed!" answered Rudolf, frightful with rage. "Now I must have the life of your accomplice, for it is you who delivered your daughter to her executioner!"

And Rudolf ordered his coach to be rapidly driven to the house of Jacques Ferrand.

CHAPTER XVI.

FURENS AMORIS.

NIGHT closed in while Rudolf was on his way to the notary's.

The pavilion occupied by Jacques Ferrand was buried in profound obscurity.

The wind howled, the rain fell as during that gloomy night, when Cecily fled for ever from the notary's house.

Extended on a bed in his sleeping apartment, feebly lighted by a lamp, Jacques Ferrand was dressed in black trousers and vest; one of the sleeves of his shirt was turned back, and a ligature around his attenuated arm announced that he had just been bled.

Polidori was standing near the bed, with one hand on the bolster, and appeared to regard the features of his accomplice with inquietude.

Nothing could be more hideously frightful than the face of Ferrand, who was then plunged in that torpor which ordinarily succeeds violent attacks.

Of a mortal pallor, strongly relieved by the shadows of the alcove, his face streaming with a cold sweat, announced the last stage of consumption; his closed eyelids were so swollen and injected with blood, that they appeared like two reddish lobes in the middle of this visage of cadaverous lividity.

"One more attack like the last, and all is over," said Polidori in a low tone, and, retiring from the bed, he commenced walking slowly up and down the room.

"Just now," he resumed, "during the attack which nearly proved fatal, I thought myself in a dream, as I heard him describe all the monstrous hallucinations which crossed his brain. His sense of hearing was of a sensibility so incredibly painful that although I spoke to him as low as possible, yet it seemed to him, he said, that his head was a bell, and that an enormous clapper of brass, set in motion by the least sound, struck against it from time to time with a deafening and horrid noise."

Polidori again drew near the bed, and remained in a contemplative attitude.

The tempest raged without; it soon burst forth in violent gusts of wind and rain, which shook all the windows of the dilapidated mansion. Notwithstanding his audacious wickedness, Polidori was superstitious; dark presentiments agitated him; he felt an indefinable uneasiness: the howlings of the storm, which alone disturbed the mournful silence of the night, inspired him with an alarm against which he struggled in vain.

To drive away these gloomy thoughts, he again examined the features of his accomplice.

"Now," said he, leaning over him, "his eyelids fill with blood. What sufferings! how protracted! and under what varied forms! Oh!" added he with a bitter smile, "when nature becomes cruel, and plays the part of tormentor, she defies the most ferocious combinations of men.

"Oh! this face is frightful. These frequent convulsions which overspread it contract it, and at times render it fearful."

Without, the tempest redoubled its fury.

"What a storm!" said Polidori, throwing himself into a chair, and leaning his face on his hands. "What a night! what a night! Nothing could be more fatal for the situation of Jacques."

After a long silence Polidori resumed:

"When I think of the past, when I think of the ambitious projects, which in concert with Sarah, I founded on the youth and inexperience of the prince—how many events! by what degrees have I fallen into the state of criminal degradation in which I live! I, who had thought to effeminate this prince, and make him the docile instrument of the advancement of which I had dreamed! From preceptor I expected to become minister. And notwithstanding my learning, my mind, from misdeed to misdeed I have attained the last degree of infamy. Behold me, in fine, the jailer of my accomplice.

"Oh, yes! the prince is without pity. Better a thousand times for Jacques Ferrand to have placed his head on the block; better a thousand times the wheel, fire, the molten lead which burns and sinks into the flesh, than the torments this wretch endures. As I see him suffer, I begin to be alarmed for my own fate. What will they do with me—what is reserved for me, the accomplice of Jacques? To be his jailer will not suffice for the vengeance of the prince. He has not saved me from the scaffold to let me live. Perhaps an eternal prison awaits me in Germany. Better that than death. I can only place myself blindly at the discretion of the prince; it is my sole chance of safety."

At this moment the storm was at its height; a chimney, blown down by the violence of the wind, fell on the roof and into the court with a noise like thunder.

Jacques Ferrand, suddenly aroused from his state of torpor, moved on the bed. A hollow groan attracted the attention of Polidori.

"He is awakening from his stupor," said he, approaching him slowly.

"Polidori," murmured Jacques Ferrand, still stretched on the bed, and with his eyes closed.

"Polidori, what noise was that?"

"A chimney has fallen down," answered Polidori in a low tone; "a frightful hurricane shakes the house to its foundations. The night is horrible, horrible!"

The notary did not hear, and half turning his head, whispered,

"Polidori, are you there!"

"Yes, yes, I am here," said Polidori in a louder voice; "but I answered softly, fearing to affect your hearing, as I did a few moments ago."

"No, now your voice reaches my ear without causing me those painful sufferings; for it seemed to me at the least noise, as if a thunderbolt had broken in my head. And yet, in the midst of all this noise, of these sufferings without name, I distinguished the voice of Cecily calling me."

"Always this infernal woman—always. But drive away these thoughts; they will kill you."

"Drive them away," cried Jacques Ferrand; "oh! never, never!"

"What mad fury! It alarms me."

"Hold, now," said the notary, in a husky voice, with his eyes fixed on an obscure corner of the alcove. "I see already—like a living thing—a shape appearing—there—there."

And he pointed with his bony finger in the direction of the vision.

"Hush, be quiet, unhappy man."

"Oh! there, there!"

"Jacques, it is death."

"Oh! I see her," added Ferrand, his teeth set. "There she is! how handsome she is! how handsome! See her long black hair; it floats in disorder upon her shoulders! And her small teeth, which are seen through her half-opened lips; her lips so red and humid! What pearls! Oh! her large eyes seem in turn to sparkle and die. Cecily! Cecily! I adore you."

"Jacques," cried Polidori, alarmed, "do not excite yourself by these phantoms."

"It is not a phantom."

"Take care; a short time ago, you know, you imagined also that you heard the songs of this woman, and your hearing was suddenly affected by fearful sufferings—take care!"

"Leave me," cried the notary, with impatience, "leave me! Of what use is hearing, except to listen to her?—sight, except to see her?"

"But the tortures which ensue, miserable fool!"

The notary did not finish.

He uttered a sharp cry of pain, throwing himself backward on the bed.

"What is the matter?" asked Polidori, with astonishment.

"Put out that light; its glare is too vivid. I cannot support it; it blinds me!"

"How?" said Polidori, more and more surprised. "There is but one lamp with a shade, and its light is very feeble."

"I tell you that the light increases here. Hold! more! more Oh, it is too much! it becomes intolerable!" raved on Jacques Ferrand, shutting his eyes with an expression of increasing pain.

"You are mad! This chamber is hardly lighted, I tell you. I have just turned down the lamps: open your eyes, you will see."

"Open my eyes! But I shall be blinded by the torrents of dazzling light which flood this apartment. Here, there, everywhere, sheets of fire—thousands of shining atoms," cried the notary, raising himself; then, uttering a cry of agony, he placed his hands on his eyes. "But I am blinded! the burning light pierces my eyelids! it consumes me! Put out that light! its casts an infernal flame."

"No more doubt," said Polidori; "his sight is stricken in the same manner as his hearing was just now. He is lost! To bleed him anew in this state would be fatal. He is lost!"

Another, sharp, terrible yell from Jacques Ferrand resounded throughout the chamber.

"Executioner! put out the lamp! Its burning splendour penetrates through my hands; they are transparent! I see the blood! it circulates in my veins! I did well to close my eyelids! this fiery lava would have entered! Oh, what torture! It is as if my eyes were pierced with redhot needles! Help! help!" cried he, struggling in his bed, a prey to horrible convulsions.

Polidori, alarmed at the violence of this attack, extinguished the light.

And both were left in utter darkness.

At this moment was heard the noise of a carriage, which stopped at the street door.

When the chamber became darkened, Ferrand's agony ceased by degrees, and he said to Polidori, "Why did you wait so long before you put out this lamp? Was it to make me endure all the torments of the damned? Oh, what I have suffered! Oh, heaven! how I have suffered!"

"Now do you suffer less?"

"I still experience a violent irritation, but it is nothing to what I felt just now. I cling to life, because the memory of Cecily is all my life."

"But this memory kills, exhausts, consumes you."

The notary did not hear his accomplice, who foresaw a new hallucination.

In effect, Ferrand resumed, with a burst of convulsive and sardonic laughter,

"To take Cecily from me! But they do not know that, by concentrating all the power of one's faculties on a single object, the impracticable is gained. Thus, directly, I am going to the chamber of Cecily, where I have not dared to go since her departure. Oh, to see, to touch the vestments which have belonged to her; the glass before which she dressed—it will be to see herself! Yes; by fixing my eyes on this glass, soon shall I see Cecily appear. It will not be an illusion—a mist; it will be she; I shall find her there, as the sculptor finds the statue in the block of marble.

"Where are you going to? said Polidori, hearing Jacques Ferrand getting up from his bed, for the most profound obscurity still reigned in the apartment.

"I go to find Cecily."

"You shall not go. The sight of her chamber will kill you."

"Cecily awaits me there."

"You shall not go—I hold you," said Polidori seizing the notary by the arm.

Jacques Ferrand, arrived at the last stage of weakness, could not struggle against Polidori, who held him with a vigorous hand.

"You wish to prevent me from going to find Cecily?"

"Yes; and, besides, there is a lamp lighted in the next room; you know what effect the light produced just now upon your sight?"

"Cecily is there; she awaits me. I would traverse a blazing furnace to join her. Let me go. She told me I was her old tiger. Take care, my claws are sharp."

"You shall not go. I will rather tie you on your bed as a madman."

"Polidori, listen: I am not mad—I have all my reason. I know very well that Cecily is not materially there; but, for me, the phantoms of my imagination are worth more than realities."

"Silence!" cried Polidori, suddenly, listening; just now I thought I heard a carriage stop at the door. I was not mistaken. I hear now the sound of voices in the court.

"You wish to distract my thought. The trick is too plain."

"I hear some one speak, I tell you, and I think I recognise—"

"You wish to deceive me," said Ferrand interrupting Polidori; "I am not your dupe."

"But, wretch, listen then—listen. Ah! do you not hear?"

"Let me go—Cecily is there—she calls me. Do not make me angry, in my turn, I tell you. Take care—do you understand? take care."

"You shall not go out."

"Take care"—

"You shall not go out from here; it is my interest that you should remain.

"You prevent me from going to find Cecily; my interest wills that you should die. Hold then!" said the notary, in a hollow voice.

Polidori uttered a cry.

"Scoundrel! you have stabbed me in the arm; but the wound is slight; you shall not escape me.

"Your wound is mortal. It is the poisoned dagger of Cecily which has stabbed you; I always carried it about me; await the effects of the poison. Ah! you loosen your grasp: you are going to die. You should not have hindered me from going to find Cecily," added Jacques Ferrand, feeling in the dark for the door.

"Oh!" murmured Polidori, "my arm stiffens—a mortal coldness seizes me—my knees tremble under me—my blood thickens in my veins—my head turns. Help," cried the accomplice of Ferrand, collecting all his strength for a last cry; "help! I die!!!"

And he sank under his own weight upon the floor. The crash of a glass door, opened with so much violence that several panes were broken to pieces, the ringing voice of Rudolf, and a noise of hasty footsteps, seemed to respond to Polidori's cry of anguish.

Jacques Ferrand, having at length found the lock in the dark, opened the door leading into an adjoining apartment, and rushed into it, his dangerous weapon in his hand.

At the same moment, threatening and formidable as the genius of vengeance, the prince entered this room from the opposite side.

"Monster!" cried Rudolf, advancing towards Jacques Ferrand, "it is my daughter whom you have killed! You are going"—

The prince did not finish; he recoiled alarmed. One would have said that his words had pierced Jacques Ferrand.

Throwing his poignard aside, and placing both his hands before his eyes, the wretch fell with his face to the floor, uttering a howl that was anything but human.

In consequence of the phenomenon of which we have spoken, of which a profound darkness had suspended the action, when Jacques Ferrand entered this chamber, brilliantly lighted, he was struck with a vertigo (similar to that which we have already described), more intolerable than if he had been exposed to a torrent of light as incandescent as that of the disc of the sun.

And the agony of this man was a fearful spectacle: he writhed in frightful convulsions, tearing the floor with his nails, as if he wished to dig a hole to escape from the horrible tortures caused by this glaring light.

Rudolf, one of his servants, and the porter of the house, who had been compelled to conduct the prince to this apartment, were transfixed with horror.

Notwithstanding his just horror, Rudolf felt an emotion of pity for the unheard-of sufferings of Jacques Ferrand; he ordered him to be laid on a sofa. This was not done without difficulty; for, fearing to be submitted again to the direct action of the light, the notary struggled violently, but when it streamed in his face he uttered another yell which filled Rudolf with terror.

After protracted torments, these attacks ceased, exhausted by their own violence.

Arrived at the mortal period of his delirium, he remembered still the words of Cecily, who had called him her tiger; by degress, his mind again wandered; he imagined himself a tiger!

Crouched in one of the corners of the room, as in his den, his hoarse, furious cries, the grinding of his teeth, the spasmodic contortions of the muscles of his forehead and face, his glaring look, gave him a vague and frightful resemblance to this ferocious beast.

"Tiger—tiger—tiger I am," said he in a broken voice, gathering himself up in a heap, "yes, tiger. How much blood! In my lair—corpses—torn to pieces! La Goualeuse—the brother of this widow—the child of Louise—here are corpses; my tigress Cecily shall take her share." Then, looking at his bony fingers, of which the nails had grown very long during his illness, he added these words: "Oh! my sharp nails: an old tiger I am, but more active, and strong, and bold. No one shall dare dispute my tigress, Cecily. Ah! she calls! she calls!" said he, looking around, and seeming to listen. After a moment's pause he groped his way along the wall, saying,

"No; I thought I heard her; she is not there, but I see her, oh! always, always! Oh! there she is! She calls me—she roars—she roars there, I come, I come."

And Jacques Ferrand dragged himself towards the middle of the chamber on his hands and knees. Although his strength was exhausted, from time to time he advanced by a convulsive spring; then he would pause, seeming to listen attentively.

"Where is she? where is she? I approach,

she flies. Ah! there; oh! she awaits me; go! go, Cecily, your old tiger is yours," cried he.

And with a desperate effort he succeeded in getting on his knees.

But suddenly falling backward with alarm, his body crouched on his heels, his hair standing on end, his look wild, his mouth distorted with terror, his hands stretched out, he seemed to struggle with rage against an invisible object, and cried in a broken voice,

"What a bite—help—my arms break—I cannot take it off—sharp teeth. No, no, oh! not the eyes—help—a black serpent—oh! its flat head—its burning eye-balls. It looks at me—it is the devil. Ah! he knows me—Jacques Ferrand—at the church—holy man—always at the church—avaunt." And the notary, raising himself a little and sustaining himself with one hand on the floor, tried with the other to make the sign of the cross.

His livid face was covered with sweat, and all the symptoms of approaching death were manifested.

He fell immediately backward, stiff and inanimate; his eyes seemed to start from their sockets; horrible convulsions stamped his features with unearthly contortions, like those forced from dead bodies by a galvanic battery; a bloody foam inundated his lips, and the life of this monster became extinct in the midst of one of his horrid visions, for he muttered these words,

"Night—dark! dark spectres—brazen skeletons—red-hot—twine around me their burning fingers—my flesh smokes—spectre—bloody—no! no—Cecily—fire—Cecily!"

Such were the last words of Jacques Ferrand.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HOSPITAL.

IT will be remembered that Fleur de Marie, saved by La Louve, had been conveyed to the country house of Dr. Griffon,* not far from Ravageurs' Island.

The worthy doctor, one of the physicians of the City Hospital, (where we shall conduct our readers) who had obtained this situation through a powerful interest, regarded his ward as a sort of place where he experimented on the poor the treatment which he applied afterward to his rich patients, never hazarding on the last any new cures before having first tried and retried the application *in anima vili*, as he said, with what kind of passionless barbarity which a blind love for science produces.

Thus, if the docter wished to convince himself of the comparative effect of some new and hazardous treatment, in order to be able to deduce consequences favourable to such or such a systam, he took a certain number of patients, treated some according to the new system, others by the ancient method.

Under some circumstances, he abandoned others to the care of nature,

After which he counted the survivors.

These terrible experiments were, truly, a human sacrifice on the altar of science.

Dr. Griffon did not seem to think of this. In the eyes of this prince of science (as they phrase it) the patients of his hospital were only subjects for study and experiment; and as, after all, there resulted sometimes from these essays *in anima vili*, a fact, or discovery useful to science, the doctor showed himself as entirely satisfied and triumphant as a general after a victory sufficiently costly in soldiers.

Homœopathy had never a more violent adversary than Dr. Griffon. He looked upon this method as absurd and homicidal; thus, strong in his convictions, and wishing, as he said, to drive the homœopathists to the wall, he offered to abandon to their care a certain number of patients, on whom they might experiment to their liking. But he affirmed in advance, sure of not being contradicted by the result, that, out of twenty patients submitted to this treatment, not over five, at the outside, would survive.

The homœopathists gave the go-by to this proposition, to the great chagrin of the doctor, who regretted the loss of this occasion to prove, by figures, the vanity of homœopathic practice. Dr. Griffon would have been stupified if any one had said to him, in reference to this free and autocratic disposition of his subjects.

"Such a state of things would cause the barbarism of those days to be regretted when condemned criminals were exposed to undergo newly-discovered surgical operations; operations which they dared not practice on the uncondemned. If it were successful, the condemned was pardoned.

"Compared to what you do, sir, this barbarity was charity.

"After all, a chance for life was thus given to a poor creature for whom the executioner was waiting, and an experiment was rendered possible which might be useful to all.

"But to try your hazardous medicaments on unfortunate artisans, for whom the hospital is the sole refuge when sickness overtakes them; to try a treatment perhaps fatal, on people whom poverty confides to you, trusting and powerless; to you, their only hope; to you, who will only answer for their life to God—do you know that this is to push the love of science to inhumanity, sir?

"How! the poorer classes already people the workshops, the field, the army; in this

*The name which I have the honour to bear, which my father, grandfather, granduncle, and great-grandfather—one of the most learned men of the 17th century—have rendered celebrated by works on theoretical and practical medicine, would forbid me from any attack, or hasty reflection concerning physicians; even though the gravity of the subject upon which I treat, and the just and deserved celebrity of the French Medical School, did not prevent me. In Dr. Griffon, I have only wished to personify one, otherwise respectable, who allows himself to to be carried away by the ardour of art; and led to make experiments, which are a serious abuse of medical power (if I may express myself in this manner), forgetting that there is something more sacred than Science—Humanity.

world they only know misery and privations; and when, at the end of their sufferings, and fatigues, they fall exhausted—half dead—sickness even does not preserve them from a last and sacrilegious 'experiment!'

"I ask your heart, sir, would not this be unjust and cruel?"

Alas! Doctor Griffon would have been touched, perhaps, by these severe words, but not convinced.

Man is made the creature of circumstances, The captain thus accustoms himself to consider his soldiers as nothing more than the pawns of the bloody game called battle. And it is because man is thus made, that society ought to protect those whom fate exposes to the action of these "humane necessities." Now the character of Dr. Griffon once admitted (and it can be admitted without much hyperbole), the inmates of this hospital had then no guarantee, no recourse against the scientific barbarity of his experiments; for there exists a grievous hiatus in the organization of the civil hospitals.

We will point it out here, so that we may be understood.

Military hospitals are each day visited by a superior officer charged to receive the complaints of the sick soldiers, and to attend to them if they appear reasonable. This oversight, completely distinct from the government of the hospital, is excellent! it has always produced the best results. It is, besides, impossible to see establishments better kept than the military hospitals; the soldiers are nursed with much care, and treated, we would say, almost with respectful commiseration.

Why not have a similar superintendence established in the civil hospitals, by men completely independent of the government and medical faculty? The complaints of the poor (if they were well founded) would thus have an impartial organ, while at present this organ is absolutely wanting.

Thus the doors of the hospital of Dr. Griffon once shut on a patient, he belonged body and soul to science. No friendly or disinterested ear can hear his griefs. He is told plainly that, being admitted out of charity, he becomes henceforth a part of the experimental domain of the doctor, and that patient and malady must serve as subjects of study and observation, analysis, or instruction, to the young students who accompany assiduously the visits of M. Griffon.

In effect, the subject soon had to answer to interrogations often the most painful, the most sorrowful; and that, not to the doctor alone, who, like the priest, fulfils a duty, and has the right to know everything—no, he must reply in a loud voice before a curious and greedy crowd of students.

Yes, in this pandemonium of science, old or young, maid or wife, were obliged to abjure every feeling or sentiment of shame, and to make the most confidential communications, submit to the most material investigations, before a numerous public; and almost always these cruel formalities aggravated their disease.

And this is neither humane nor just; it is because the poor enter the hospital in the holy name of charity, that they should be treated with compassion and with respect, for misfortune has its dignity.

On reading the following lines, it will be perceived why we have caused them to be preceded by these reflections.

Nothing could be more sad than the nocturnal aspect of the vast ward of the hospital, where we will introduce our readers.

Along the whole length of its gloomy walls were ranged two parallel rows of beds, vaguely lighted by the sepulchral glimmerings of a lamp suspended from the ceiling: the narrow windows were barred with iron, like a prison's.

The atmosphere is so sickening, so filled with disease, that the new patients did not often become acclimated without danger: this increase of suffering is a kind of premium which every new-comer inevitably pays for a hospital residence.

The air of this immense hall is, then, heavy and corrupted.

At intervals, the silence of night is interrupted, now by plaintive moans, now by profound sighs, uttered by the feverish sleepers: then all is quiet, and naught is heard but the regular and monotonous tickings of a large clock, which strikes the hours so long, for sleepless suffering.

One of the extremities of this hall was almost plunged into obscurity.

Suddenly was heard a great stir, and the noise of rapid footsteps: a door was opened and shut several times: a sister of charity, whose large white cap and black dress, were visible from the light which she carried in her hand, approached one of the last beds on the right side of the hall.

Some of the patients awaking, with a start, sat up in bed, attentive to what was passing.

Soon the folding doors were opened.

A priest entered, bearing a crucifix—the two sisters knelt.

By the pale light which shone like a glory around this bed, while the other parts of the hall remained in obscurity, the almoner of the hospital was seen leaning over this couch of misery, pronouncing some words, the slow sounds of which were lost in the silence of night.

At the end of a quarter of an hour the priest took a sheet, which he threw over the bed.

Then he retired.

One of the kneeling sisters arose, closed the curtains, and returned to her prayers alongside of her companion.

Then everything became once more silent.

One of the patients had just died.

Among the women who did not sleep, and who had witnessed this mute scene, were three persons whose names have already been mentioned in the course of this history:

Mademoiselle de Fermont, daughter of the unhappy widow ruined by the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand;

La Lorraine, a poor washerwoman, to whom Fleur de Marie had formerly given what money she had left;

And Jeanne Duport, sister of Pique-Vinaigre, the patterer of La Force.

We know Mademoiselle de Fermont and the juggler's sister. La Lorraine, was a woman of about twenty, with a sweet face, but extremely pale and thin! she was in the last stage of consuption; there was no hope of saving her; she knew it, and was wasting away slowly.

The distance was not so great between the beds of these two women but they could speak in a low tone, and not be overheard by the sisters.

"There is another one gone," whispered La Lorraine, thinking of the dead, and speaking to herself. "She will not suffer more—she is very happy."

"She is very happy, if she has left no children," added Jeanne.

"Oh! you are not asleep, neighbour," said La Lorraine to her. "How do you get on, for your first night here? Last night, as soon as you were brought in, you were placed in bed, and I did not dare to speak to you; I heard you sob."

"Oh! yes; I have wept much."

"You, are, then, in much pain?"

"Yes, but I am used to pain; it is from sorrow I weep. At length I fell asleep; I was still sleeping when the noise of the doors awoke me. When the priest came in, and the good sisters knelt, I soon saw it was a woman who was dying; then I said to myself a pater and an ave for her."

"I also; and, as I have the same complaint as this woman had, who is just dead, I could not prevent myself from saying, 'Here is another whose sufferings are ended; she is very happy!'"

"Yes, as I told you, if she has no children."

"You have children, then?"

"Three," said the sister of Pique-Vinaigre, with a sigh. "And you?"

"I had a little girl, but I did not keep her long. I am a washerwoman at the boats; I worked as long as I could. But everything has an end; when my strength failed me, my bread failed me also. They turned me out of my lodgings; I do not know what would have become of me, except for a poor woman who gave me shelter in a cellar, where she had concealed herself to escape from her husband, who wished to kill her. There I was confined on the straw; but, happily, this good woman knew a young girl, beautiful and charitable as as an angel from heaven; this young girl had a little money; she took me from the cellar, and placed me in a furnished room, paying the rent in advance, giving me, besides, a willow cradle for my child, and forty francs for myself, with some clothes."

"Good little girl! I also have met, by chance, with one who may be called her equal, a young dressmaker, very obliging. I had gone to see my poor brother, who is a prisoner," said Jeanne, after a moment of hesitation; "and I met in the visitors' room this young girl of whom I speak; having heard me say to my brother that I was not happy, she came to me, much embarrassed, to offer what services were in her power."

"How kind that was in her!"

"I accepted; she gave me her address, and, two days after, this dear little Rigolette—that's her dear name—gave me employment."

"Rigolette!" cried La Lorraine.

"You know her?"

"No; but the young girl who was so generous to me, several times mentioned the name of Rigolette: they were friends together."

"Well!" said Jeanne, smiling sadly, "since we are neighbours in sickness, we should be friends like our two benefactresses."

"Willingly; my name is Annette Gerbier, otherwise La Lorraine, washermoman."

"And mine, Jeanne Duport, fringe-maker. Ah! it is so good, at the hospital, to be able to find some one who is not altogether a stranger, above all, when you come for the first time, and you have many troubles! But I do not wish to think of this. Tell me, La Lorraine, what was the name of the young girl who has been so kind to you?"

"She was called La Goualeuse. All my sorrow is that I have not seen her for a long time. She was as beautiful as the Holy Virgin, with fine flaxen hair and blue eyes, so sweet—so sweet! Unfortunately, notwithstanding her assistance, my poor child died at two months:" and Lorraine wiped away a tear.

"Poor Lorraine!"

"I regret, my child, for myself, not for her, poor little dear! She would have too much to struggle with, for she soon would have been an orphan. I have not a long time to live."

"You should not have such ideas at your age. Have you been sick for a long time?"

"It will soon be three months. Bless me! when I had to work for myself and my child, I increased my labour; the winter was cold, I caught a cold on my chest; at this time I lost my little girl. In watching her I forgot myself. To that add sorrow, and I am what you see me, consumptive, doomed—as was the actress who has just died."

"At your age there is always hope."

"The actress was only two years older, and you see—"

"She whom the good sisters are watching now, was she an actress?"

"Oh, yes—what a fate! She had been beautiful as the day. She had plenty of money, equipages, diamonds; but, unfortunately, the smallpox disfigured her; then want came, then poverty—behold her dead in the hospital. Yet, she was not proud; on the contrary, she was kind and gentle to everybody; she told us that she had written to a gentleman whom she had known in her prosperity, who had loved her; she wrote him to come and reclaim her body, because it hurt her feelings to think she would be dissected—cut in pieces."

"And this gentleman has come?"

"No."

"Oh! that is very cruel."

"At each moment the poor woman asked for him, saying continually, 'Oh! he will come; oh! he will surely come;' and yet she died, and he had not come."

"Her end must have been so much the more painful."

"Oh, Lord, yes; for she dreaded so much what they would do to her body."

"After having been rich and happy, to die here is sad! For us, it is only a change of misery."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE VISIT.

"SPEAKING of that," resumed La Lorraine, after a moment's hesitation, "I wish you would render me a service."

"Speak."

"If I should die, as is probable, before you leave this, I wish you would claim my body—I have the same dread as the actress; and I have put aside the small amount of money I have left, so that I can be buried."

"Do not have such ideas."

"Never mind—do you promise me?"

"Yes! but, Lord be praised, that will not happen."

"But, if it does happen, I shall not have, thanks to you, the same misfortune as the actress."

"Poor lady, after having been rich, to end thus!"

"The actress was not the only one in this room who has been rich, Madame Jeanne."

"Call me Jeanne, as I call you La Lorraine."

"You are very kind."

"Who is it that has been rich besides?"

"A young person not over fifteen, who was brought here last night, before you came. She was so weak that they were obliged to carry her. The sister said that this young girl and her mother were very respectable people, who had been ruined."

"Her mother is also here?"

"No; the mother was so very sick, that she could not be moved. The poor child would not leave her, and they profited by a fainting fit to bring her here. It was the proprietor of a wretched lodging-house who, for fear that they would die in his abode, applied for their admission."

"And where is she?"

"There, in the bed opposite to yours.."

"And only fifteen?"

"At the most."

"The age of my eldest daughter!" said Jeanne, unable to restrain her tears.

"Pardon me," said La Lorraine, sadly, "pardon me, if I cause you pain, unintentionally, by speaking of your children. Perhaps they are sick also?"

"Alas! I do not know what will become of them if I stay here more than a week!"

"And your husband?"

After a pause, Jeanne answered, drying her tears, "Since we are friends together, La Lorraine, I can tell you my troubles, as you have told me yours—it will solace me. My husband was a good workman; he has become dissipated; he abandoned me and my children, after having sold all that we possessed; I worked hard; charitable people aided me; I began again to raise my head; I brought up my little family as well as I could, when my husband came back, with a bad woman, and again took all I had, leaving me to commence anew."

"Poor Jeanne! could you not prevent that?"

"I could have procured a separation by law, but the law is too dear, as my brother says. Alas! you shall see what effect this has upon us poor folks: some days since, I returned to see my brother: he gave me three francs, which he had collected from those who listened to his stories in prison."

"It is plain to see that you are a kind-hearted family," said La Lorraine, who, from a rare instinctive delicacy, did not interrogate Jeanne as to the cause of her brother's imprisonment.

"I took courage, then; I thought that my husband would not return for a long time, for he had taken from me all that he could take. No, I am mistaken," added the unhappy mother, shuddering: "there remained my daughter—my poor Catherine."

"Your daughter?"

"You shall see—you shall see. Three days since, I was at work, with my children around me; my husband came in. I saw at once that he had been drinking. 'I come after Catharine,' said he. I caught my daughter by the arm, and asked Duport, 'Where do you wish to take her?' 'That does not concern you—she is my daughter; let her tie up some clothes and follow me.' At these words, my blood curdled in my veins; for, imagine, La Lorraine, that this woman who is with my husband—it makes me shudder to say it, but—"

"Ah! yes, she is a real monster."

"'Take Catharine away!' I answered to Duport: 'never!' 'Now?' said my husband, whose lips were already white with rage, 'do not provoke me, or I'll knock you down,' then he took my child by the arm, saying, 'Come with me, Catharine.' The poor little thing threw her arms around my neck; bursting into tears, she cried, 'I wish to stay with mamma!' Seeing this, Duport became furious: he tore my child from me, giving me a blow with his fist, which knocked me down; and once down—but, do you see, La Lorraine," said poor Jeanne, interrupting herself, "it is very certain he would not have been so cruel, except he had been drinking; in fine, he trampled upon me, loading me with curses."

"How bad he must be!"

"My poor children fell on their knees, begging for mercy; Catharine also. Then he said to my daughter, swearing like a madman, 'If

you do not come with me, I will finish the job with your mother!' I vomited blood. I felt myself half dead; but I cried to Catharine, 'Rather let him kill me! but do not follow your father!' 'Will you not be silent, then?' said Duport, giving me another blow, which made me lose all consciousness."

"What misery! what misery!"

"When I came to myself I found my two little boys beside me, weeping."

"And your daughter?"

"Gone!" cried the poor mother, sobbing convulsively; "yes, gone! My other children told me that their father had struck her, threatening to take what life I had remaining on the spot. Then, what could you expect? the poor child was bewildered; she threw herself upon me for a last embrace, kissed her little brothers, and then my husband carried her off! Ah! that bad woman waited for them at the door, I am sure!"

"And could you not complain to the police?"

"At first I could think of nothing but Catharine's departure, but I soon felt great pains all over my body, I could not walk. Alas! what I had so much dreaded arrived. Yes—I had said to my brother, 'Some day my husband will beat me so hard—so hard, that I shall be obliged to go to a hospital. Then, my children, what will become of them?' And now here I am, at the hospital, and I say, What will become of my children?"

"But is there not any justice, then, my God! for the poor?"

"Too dear! too dear for us, as my brother said," answered Jeanne Duport, with bitterness. "My neighbours went to seek the police, they came: it was painful for me to denounce Duport, but on account of my daughter it was necessary. I said only that, in a quarrel I had with him about taking away my daughter, he had pushed me; that it was nothing, but that I wanted my daughter back again."

"And what did he reply?"

"That my husband had a right to take away his child, not being separated from me. 'You have only one way,' said the officer to me: 'commence a civil suit, demand a separation of body, and then the blows which your husband has given you, his conduct with this vile woman, will be in your favour, and they will force him to deliver up your daughter; otherwise, he can keep her in his own right.' But to commence a suit! I have not the means! I have my children to feed. 'What can I do?' said he; 'so it is.' Yes," repeated Jeanne, sobbing, "he was right; so it is; and because that so it is, in three months, perhaps, my daughter will be a street-walker! while, if I had had the means to commence a suit, it would not have happened."

"But that will never happen, your daughter must love you so much."

"But she is so young! At that age, fear, bad treatment, bad counsels, bad examples! Poor Catharine! so gentle, so loving! and I, who only this year wished her to renew her first communion!"

"Oh! you have much sorrow. And I complained of mine!" said Lorraine, wiping her eyes. "And your other children!"

"On their account I did what I could to keep out of the hospital. I was obliged to give up. I vomit blood three or four times a day; I have a fever which prostrates me; I am unable to work. At least, by being cured quickly, I can return to my children, if, before this, they are not dead with hunger or imprisoned as beggars. I here—who will they have to take care of them and feed them?"

"Oh! this is terrible! You have no good neighbours, then?"

"They are as poor as I am, and they have five children of their own; thus two children more is a heavy burden; however, they have promised me to feed them a little, during eight days. It is all they can do; it is taking from them bread, of which they themselves have none too much; so I must be cured in eight days; oh yes! cured or not, I shall go out, all the same."

"But why have you not thought of this good Miss Rigolet, whom you met in prison? She would surely have taken care of them."

"I did think of her; and, although the dear little soul has, perhaps, as much as she can do to get along, I sent her word by a neighbour of my troubles. Unfortunately, she is in the country, where she is going to be married; so the porter of the house said."

"Thus, in eight days, your poor children—but no, your neighbours will not have the heart to send them away."

"But what would you have them to do? They do not eat now as much as they want, and they are obliged to take it out of the mouths of their own to give it to mine. No, no—do you see, I must be cured in eight days. I have already demanded it from all the doctors I have seen since yesterday, but they answered me, laughing, 'You must address yourself to the chief physician for that.' When will he come, La Lorraine?"

"Chut! I think he is there. We must not talk while he is making his visit," answered La Lorraine.

During the conversation of the two women the day commenced to dawn.

A confused movement announced the arrival of Dr. Griffon, who soon entered the hall, accompanied by his friend the Count de Saint Remy, who having a deep interest in Madame de Fermont and her daughter, was far from expecting to find the latter unfortunate girl in the hospital.

As he came into the ward, the cold and stern features of Dr. Griffon seemed to light up with a glow of satisfaction. Casting around him a look of complacency and authority, he answered with a patronising bend of the head the eager greetings of the sisters.

The rough and austere physiognomy of the Count de Saint Remy was stamped with deep sadness. The fruitlessness of his attempts to discover the traces of Madame de Fermont, the

ignominous conduct of his son, who had preferred an infamous life to death, crushed him to the ground with sorrow.

"Well!" said Dr. Griffon to the Count, with a triumphant air, "what do you think of my hospital?"

"In truth," answered Saint Remy, "I do not know why I have yielded to your desire: nothing is more heart-rending than the aspect of these wards filled with sick. Since my entrance here my feelings quite overcome me."

"Bah! Bah! in fifteen minutes you will think no more about it; you, who are a philosopher, will find ample matter for observation; and then it would have been a shame that you, one of my oldest friends, should not visit the theatre of my labours—of my glory; that you should not see me at my work. All my pride is in my profession; is it wrong?"

"No, certainly not; and after your excellent care of Fleur de Marie, whom you have saved, I could refuse you nothing. Poor child! what touching charms her features have preserved, notwithstanding her dangerous illness!"

"She has furnished me with a very curious medical fact; I am enchanted with her! By-the-bye, how has she passed this night? Did you see her this morning before you left Asnieres?"

"No, but La Louve, who nurses her with unceasing assiduity, told me that she had slept perfectly well. Can we allow her to write to-day?"

After a moment's hesitation, the doctor answered, "Yes. As long as the subject was not completely convalescent, I feared the slightest emotion for her, the slightest application of mind; but now I do not see that any inconvenience can arise from her writing."

"At least she could inform her friends?"

"Doubtless. Have you heard nothing more concerning the fate of Madame de Fermont and her daughter?"

"Nothing," said Saint Remy, sighing. "My constant researches have no success. I have no more hope but in Lady d'Harville, who, as I am told, also takes a lively interest in these unfortunates; perhaps she may have some information which might lead to her discovery. Three days ago I went to her residence; she was expected to arrive every moment. I have written to her on this subject, begging her to answer me as soon as possible."

During the conversation of Saint Remy and Dr. Griffon, several persons had slowly assembled around a large table occupying the middle of the hall; on this table was a register, where the students attached to the hospital, who might be recognised by their long white aprons, came in turn to sign their names as being present; a large number of young students arrived successively to swell the scientific retinue of Dr. Griffon, who, arriving a few moments in advance of his usual hour, waited until it struck.

"You see my dear Saint Remy, that my staff is quite considerable," said Dr. Griffon, with pride pointing to the crowd who came to attend to his practical instructions.

"And these young men follow you to the bed of each patient?"

"They only come for that."

"But all these beds are occupied by women."

"Well!"

"The presence of so many men must cause them much painful confusion?"

"Tush, a patient has no sex."

"In your eyes, perhaps; but in their own—modesty, shame."

"All these fine things must be left at the door, my dear Alceste; here we commence on the living experiments and studies which we finish in the dissecting room on the corpse."

"Hold, doctor: you are the best and the most honest of men; I owe you my life; I recognise your excellent qualities; but habit and the love of your profession make you view certain questions in a manner that is revolting to me. I leave you," said Saint Remy, turning to leave the hall.

"What childishness!" cried the doctor, detaining him.

"No, no—there are some things which wound me and make me indignant; I forsee that it will be torture for me to accompany you. I will not go, but I will await you here, near this table."

"What a man you are with your scruples! But I will not let you off. I admit it may be unpleasant for you to go from bed to bed! remain, then, there; I will call you for two or three cases which are very curious."

"Very well; since you are so very urgent, that will be enough, and more than enough."

The clock struck half past seven.

"Come, gentlemen," said Dr. Griffon, and he commenced his visits, followed by a numerous train.

On arriving at the first bed of the range on the right, of which the curtains were closed, the sister said to the doctor,

"Sir, number one died this morning at half past four."

"So late? that surprises me; yesterday morning I would not have given her the day: has the body been claimed?"

"No, doctor."

"So much the better—we can proceed with the autopsy; I can make some one happy;" then, addressing one of the students, the doctor added, "My dear Dunnoyer, you have wished for a subject for a long time; you are the first on the list; this one is yours."

"Ah! sir, how kind you are!"

"I could wish oftener to recompense your zeal, my dear friend; but mark the subject, and take possession."

And the doctor passed on.

The student with the aid of a scalpel, cut very delicately on the arm of the actress an F and a D, in order to take possession, as the doctor said.

"La Lorraine," whispered Jeanne Duport to

her neighbour. "who are all these people tha follow the doctor?"

"They are pupils and students."

"Oh! will all these young men be there when he examines me?"

"Alas! yes."

"But it is on my chest I am injured. Will they examine me before all these men?"

"Yes, yes, it must be so—they wish it. I wept enough the first time—I was dying with shame; I resisted, they threatened to turn me away; I was obliged to submit, but it affected me so much that I was worse. Judge, then, almost naked before so many people—it is very painful."

"Before the physician alone—I comprehend that—if it is necessary—and even that costs much. But why before all these young men?"

"They are learning; they teach them with us. What would we have? we are here for that; it is on this condition that we are received here."

"Ah! I comprehend," said Jeanne Duport, with bitterness: "they do not give us something for nothing. But yet, there are occasions where this could not be. Thus, if my poor daughter Catherine, who is but fifteen, should come to a hospital, would they dare before all these young men? Oh! no, I think I would prefer to see her die at home."

"If she came here, she would have to obey the rules, like you, like me."

"Hush, La Lorraine; if this poor little lady who is opposite should hear us—she who was rich, who perhaps has never before left her mother—it is going to be her turn—judge how confused and unhappy she will be."

"It is true, it is true; I shudder when I think of it, poor child!"

"Silence, Jeanne, here is the doctor!" said La Lorraine

CHAPTER XIX.

CLAIRE DE FERMONT.

AFTER having rapidly visited several patients whose cases presented no great interest, the doctor at length reached the bed of Jeanne Duport.

At the sight of the eager crowd, who, anxious to see and to know, to understand and to learn, pressed around her bed, the unhappy woman, seized with a tremour of fear and shame, wrapped herself closely in the covering. The severe and intelligent face of Dr. Griffon, his penetrating look, his brow habitually contracted, his rough manner of speaking, augmented still more the alarm of Jeanne.

"A new subject!" said the doctor, casting his eye on the card where was inscribed the nature of the malady of the new comer.

He preserved a profound silence, while his assistants, imitating the prince of science, fixed their eyes on the patient with curiosity. She, to throw aside as much as possible all the painful emotions caused by so many spectators, looked steadily at the doctor, with deep anguish.

After an examination of several minutes, the doctor, remarking something anomalous in the yellowish tint of the eye ball, approached nearer to her, and with the end of his finger pushing back the eyelid, he examined the crystalline lens.

Then several students, answering to a kind of mute invitation of their professor, went, in turn, to observe the appearance of the eye.

Afterward the doctor proceeded to this interrogatory:

"Your name?"

"Jeanne Duport," murmured the patient, more and more alarmed.

"Your age!"

"Thirty-six and a half."

"Louder. Born in—"

"Paris."

"Your occupation?"

"Fringemaker."

"Married."

"Alas! yes, sir," answered Jeanne, with a deep sigh.

"How long since?"

"Eighteen years."

"Any children?"

Here, instead of answering, the unhappy mother gave vent to her tears, for a long time restrained.

"We do not want tears, but an answer. Have you any children?"

"Yes, sir; two little boys and a girl."

"How long have you been sick?"

"For four days, sir," said Jeanne wiping her eyes.

"Tell me how you became sick."

"Sir, there are so many people, I do not dare."

"Where do you come from, my dear?" said the doctor, impatiently. "Would you not like me to bring a confessional here? Come, speak, and be quick. Be composed, we are quite a family party—quite a large family, as you see," added the prince of science, who was on that day in a gay humour. "Come, let us finish."

More and more intimidated, Jeanne said, stammering and hesitating at each word, "I had, sir, a quarrel with my husband, on the subject of my children; I mean to say, of my eldest daughter. He wished to take her away. I—you comprehend, sir,—I did not wish it on account of a vile woman, who might give bad advice to my child; then my husband, who was drunk—oh! yes, sir, except for that he would not have done it—my husband pushed me very hard; I fell, and—then, a short time after, I began to throw up blood."

"Ta, ta, ta; your husband pushed you, and you fell. You set it off very nicely. He has certainly done more than push you; he must have struck you very hard, and, what is more, several times. Perhaps, also, he has trampled you under foot. Come, answer! tell the truth."

"Ah! sir, I assure you he was drunk, otherwise he would not have been so wicked."

"Good or wicked, drunk or sober, it has no-

thing to do with present matters; I am not a magistrate, my good woman; I only wish to establish a fact. You have been knocked down and trampled upon, have you not?"

"Alas! yes, sir," said Jeanne, bursting into tears; "and yet I have never given him cause for complaint. I work as much as I can, and I—"

"The epigastrum must be painful? you must feel a great heat there?" said the doctor, interrupting Jeanne; "you must experience lassitude, uneasiness, nausea?"

"Yes, sir. I only came here at the last extremity, otherwise I would not have abandoned my children, for whom I am so much worried; and then Catherine—ah! it is on her account I fear the most. If you knew—"

"Your tongue!" said the doctor, again interrupting the patient.

This order appeared so strange to Jeanne, who had thought to excite feelings of compassion in the doctor, that she did not at first comply with it, but looked at him with amazement.

"Let us see this tongue of which you make so good use," said the doctor, smiling; then he held down, with the end of his finger, her under jaw.

After causing the students to examine the tongue closely, in order to ascertain its colour and dryness, the doctor stepped back a moment. Jeanne, overcoming her fear, cried in a trembling voice.

"Sir, I am going to tell you: some neighbours, as poor as myself, have been kind enough to take charge of my children, but for eight days only. That is a great deal. At the end of this time, I must return home. Thus, I entreat you, for the love of Heavon! cure me as soon as possible—or *almost* cure me, so that I can get up and work. I have only a week before me, for—"

"Face discoloured—state of prostration complete; yet the pulse hard, strong, and frequent." said the imperturbable doctor, looking at Jeanne. "Remark it well, gentlemen: oppression—heat at the epigastrium, all these symptoms certainly announce *hematemesis* probably complicated with hepatatis, caused by domestic sorrows, as the yellowish coloration of the globe of the eye indicates; the subject has received violent blows in the regions of the epigastrium and abdomen; the vomiting of blood is necessarily caused by some organic lesion of certain viscera. On this subject I will call your attention to a very curious point—very curious. The *post mortem* examinations of those who die with the complaint of which this *subject* is attacked, offer results singularly variable; often the malady very acute and very serious, carries off the patient in a few days, and leaves no traces of its existence; at other times the spleen, the liver, the pancreas, present lesions more or less serious. It is probable that the *subject* before us has suffered some of these lesions; we are going, then, to try to assure ourselves of this fact, and you—you will also assure yourselves by an attentive examination of the patient." And, with a rapid movement, Dr. Griffon, throwing the bedclothes back, almost entirely uncovered Jeanne. It is repugnant to our feelings to depict the piteous struggles of this poor creature, who wept bitterly from shame, imploring the doctor and his auditory to leave her.

But at the threat, "You will be turned out of the hospital if you do not submit to the established usages"—a threat so overwhelming for those to whom the hospital is the last resource, Jeanne submitted to a public investigation, which lasted for a long time—a very long time; for the doctor analyzed and explained each symptom, and the more studious of the assistants wished to join practice to theory, and have an occular assurance of the state of the patient.

As a consequence of this cruel scene, Jeanne experienced an emotion so violent that she had a severe nervous attack, for which Dr. Griffon gave an additional prescription.

The visit was continued.

The doctor soon reached the bed of Claire de Fermont, a victim, as well as her mother, of the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand.

Miss de Fermont, wearing the linen cap furnished by the hospital, leaned her head in a languishing manner on the bolster of her bed: through the ravages of sickness could be traced, on this ingenuous and sweet face, the remains of distinguished beauty.

After a night of bitter anguish, the poor child had fallen into a kind of feverish stupor before the doctor and his scientific cortege entered the hall; thus the noise attending his visit had not yet awakened her.

"A new *subject*, gentlemen," said the prince of the science, running his eye over the card which a student presented to him. "Disease, *slow fever*—nervous. Plague on it!" cried the doctor, with an expression of profound satisfaction; "if the attending physician is not mistaken in his diagnostic, it is a most excellent windfall; I have desired a slow nervous fever for a long time, as this is not a malady of the poor. These affections are caused in almost every case by serious perturbations in the social position of the *subject*; and it cannot be denied that the more the position is elevated, the more profound are the perturbations. It is, besides, an affection the more to be remarked from its peculiar character. It is traced back to the highest antiquity: the writings of Hippocrates leave no doubt on this subject—it is very plain; this fever, as I have said, is almost always caused by violent sorrows. Now, sorrow is as old as the world: yet, what is singular, before the eighteenth century, this malady was not described by any author; it is Huxman, who did so much honour to the profession at this epoch—it is Huxman, I say, who was the first to give a monograph of the nervous fever—a monograph which has become classic; and yet it was a malady of the old school," added the doctor, laughing. "It belongs to this grand, ancient, and illustrious *febris* family,

of which the origin is lost in the night of time. But do not let us rejoice too much ; let us, in effect, see if we have the happiness to possess a specimen of this curious affection. It would be doubly desirable, for I have wished for a long time to test the internal use of phosphorus —yes, gentlemen," repeated the doctor, on hearing a kind of murmur of curiosity among his auditory, "yes, gentlemen, phosphorus ; it is a very curious experiment which I wish to make —it is bold ! but *audacès fortuna juvant*—and the occasion will be excellent. We are going, in the first place, to examine if the *subject* presents on all parts of the body, and especially on the breast, this miliary eruption, so symptomatic, according to Huxman ; and you will assure yourselves, by feeling the subject, of the kind of rugosity this eruption causes. But do not let us sell the skin of the bear before we bring him to the ground," added the prince of science, who was unusually jocular.

And he slightly touched her shoulder to arouse her.

The girl started and opened her large eyes, sunken by disease.

Let her terror and alarm be imagined. While a crowd of men surrounded her bed and followed her every motion with their eyes, she felt the hand of the doctor throw back the covering, and slip into the bed in order to feel her pulse.

Collecting all her strength, with a voice of anguish and affright she cried.

"Mother ! help ! mother !"

By a chance almost providential, at the moment when the cries of Miss de Fermont made the old Count de Saint Remy start from his chair, for he recognised the voice, the door of the hall opened, and a young woman, dressed in mourning, entered precipitately, accompanied by the director of the hospital.

This woman was Lady d'Harville.

"In mercy, sir," said she to the director, with the greatest anxiety, "conduct me to Miss de Fermont."

"Be good enough to follow me, my lady," answered the director, respectfully. "She is at No. 17, in this hall."

"Unfortunate child ! here—here !" said Lady d'Harville, wiping her eyes ; "oh ! it is frightful."

Preceded by the director, she advanced rapidly towards the group assembled around the bed, when these words were heard, pronounced with indignation :

"I tell you that it is murder—you will kill her, sir."

"But, my dear Saint Remy, listen then—"

"I repeat to you, sir, that your conduct is atrocious. I regard Miss de Fermont as my daughter. I forbid you to approach her; I will have her immediately removed hence."

"But, my dear friend, it is a case of slow nervous fever, very rare. I wish to try phosphorus. It is a unique occasion. Promise me at least that I shall take care of her. What matters it where you take her, since you deprive my clinique of a *subject* so precious ?"

"If you were not mad, you would be a monster," answered the Count de Saint Remy.

Clemence listened to these words with increasing anguish ; but the crowd was so dense, that the director was obliged to say in a loud voice,

"Make room, gentlemen, if you please—make room for her ladyship, the most noble the Marchioness d'Harville, who comes to see No. 17."

At these words the students fell back with as much eagerness as respectful admiration, on seeing the charming face of Clemence, to which emotion had given a most lively colour.

"Madame d'Harville," cried the Count de Saint Remy, pushing the doctor rudely aside, and advancing towards Clemence. "Oh ! it is Heaven who sends here one of its angels. Madame, I knew that you had interested yourself for these unfortunates. More fortunate than I, you have found them ; as for me, it was chance which brought me here, to behold a scene of unheard-of barbarity. Unfortunate child ! Do you see, madame—do you see ! And you, gentlemen, in the name of your daughters, or your sisters, have pity on a child of sixteen, I entreat you ; leave me alone with madame and the good sisters. As soon as she recovers a little, I will have her removed hence."

"So be it. I will sign an order for her departure ; but I will follow her steps—I will cling fast to her. It is a *subject* which belongs to me, and she will do well. I will take care of her. I will not experiment with the phosphorus—well understood—I will pass the nights with her if it is necessary, as I have passed them with you, ungrateful Saint Remy ; for this fever is quite as singular as yours. They are two sisters, who have the same claim to my interest."

"Confounded man, why have you so much science ?" said the count, knowing that in truth, he could not confide Miss de Fermont to more skilful hands.

"Eh ! it is very plain," whispered the doctor in his ear. "I have much science, because I experiment, because I risk and practice much on my *subjects*. Now ! shall I have my slow fever, old growler ?"

"Yes ; but can this lady be removed ?"

"Certainly."

"Then, for Heaven's sake ! retire."

"Come, sirs," said the prince of science, "we shall be deprived of a precious study ; but I'll keep you informed of the case."

And Dr. Griffon, accompanied by his numerous attendants, continued his rounds, leaving Saint Remy and Madame d'Harville with Claire de Fermont.

CHAPTER XX.

FLEUR DE MARIE.

DURING the scene which we have just described Claire, still in her fainting fit, was delivered to the tender care and attentions of Clemence and the

sisters; one of the latter sustained her drooping head, while Lady d'Harville, leaning over the bed, wiped away with her hand kerchief the cold sweat from the brow of the patient. Profoundly affected, Saint Remy contemplated this touching picture, when a sudden thought struck him, and he drew near Clemence, and said, in a low tone,

"And the mother of this unfortunate, madame?"

The marchioness turned towards Saint Remy, and answered, with sadness,

"She has no longer a mother, my lord."

"Dead!"

"I only learned last night, on my return, the address of Madame de Fermont, and her alarming situation. At one o'clock in the morning I was with her, accompanied by my physician. Oh! sir, what a picture! poverty in all its horrors—and no hope of saving the expiring mother!"

"Oh! how frightful must have been her agony, if the thought of her daughter was present!"

"Her last words were—my daughter!"

"What a death! she, the tender mother, so devoted. It is terrible!"

Here one of the sisters entered, interrupting the conversation, and said to the lady:

"The young lady is very feeble—she scarcely has any consciousness; in a short time she may revive. If you do not fear to remain here, madame, and wait until she comes to herself, I will offer you my chair."

"Give it to me," said Clemence, taking a seat alongside of the bed. "I will not take my eyes from her; I wish that she should, at least, see a friendly face when she recovers; then I will take her with me, since the doctor decides that she can be removed without danger."

"Oh! madame, may God bless you for what you do," said Saint Remy; "but pardon me for not having told you my name—so much sorrow! so much emotion!—I am the Count de Saint Remy; the husband of Madame de Fermont was my most intimate friend. I live at Angers. I left that city because I was uneasy at not having received any news from these two noble and worthy women. I have since heard that they have been completely ruined."

"Oh! sir, you do not know all. Madame Fermont has been most cruelly despoiled!"

"By her notary, perhaps? For a moment I had such a suspicion."

"The man was a monster, sir? Alas! this cruel crime is not his only one. But, happily," said Clemence, thinking of Rudolf, "he has been compelled to make restitution; and while closing the eyes of Madame Fermont, I have been able to assure her that her daughter is provided for. Her death thus had fewer pangs."

"I comprehend; knowing that her daughter was under your protection, madame, my poor friend died more tranquilly."

"Not only is my protection for ever secured to Miss de Fermont, but her fortune will also be restored."

"Her fortune! How? The notary—"

"Has been forced to restore her money, which he had appropriated to himself by a horrid crime!"

"A crime?"

"This man assassinated the brother of Madame Fermont, and made her believe that this unfortunate man had committed suicide, after having dissipated her fortune."

"This is horrible! it can hardly be credited; and yet I have had my doubts about this notary, for Renneville was honour itself. And this money—"

"Is deposited with a venerable priest, M. le Cure, of Bonne-Nouvelle; he will hand it to Miss de Fermont."

"This restitution is not sufficient for human justice, madame! The scaffold claims this notary, for he has not only committed one murder, but two. The death of Madame de Fermont, the sufferings which her daughter has endured on this hospital bed, have been caused by the infamous abuse of confidence of this wretch!"

"And this wretch has committed another murder, quite as frightful!"

"What do you say, madame?"

"If he made away with the brother of Madame Fermont by a pretended suicide, only a few days since he cruelly murdered a young girl, in whose destruction he was interested, by causing her to be drowned, certain that this would be attributed to accident."

Saint Remy shuddered, looked at Madame d'Harville with surprised, and thinking of Fleur de Marie, cried,

"Oh! what a strange coincidence!"

"What is the matter, my lord?"

"That young girl! Where was it he wished to drown her?"

"In the Seine, near Asnieres, I am told."

"It is she! it is the same!" cried Saint Remy.

"Of whom do you speak, my lord?"

"Of the girl this monster had an interest in."

"Fleur de Marie?"

"Do you know her, my lady?"

"Poor child! I loved her tenderly. Ah! if you had known how beautiful she was! But how did your lordship—"

"Dr. Griffon and myself gave her the first assistance."

"The first assistance? to her? where?"

"On Ravageurs Island, when she was saved."

"Saved! Fleur de Marie! saved?"

"By a good creature, who, at the risk of her life, drew her out of the Seine. But what is the matter, madame?"

"Oh! sir, I dare not believe in so much happiness. I entreat you, tell me—describe the girl!"

"Of admirable beauty, and angelic face—"

"Large blue eyes—flaxen hair?"

"Yes, my lady."

"And when they tried to drown her, was she with an aged woman?"

"In fact it was only yesterday she could speak. She then mentioned that an old woman accompanied her."

"God be praised!" cried Clemence, clasping her hands fervently. "I can inform him that his favourite still lives. What joy for him, who in his last letter, spoke of this poor child with such painful regret! Pardon me, sir; but if your lordship only knew how happy your information makes me, as well as another, who, still more than myself, has loved and protected Fleur de Marie! But I pray you, where is she at this moment?"

"Near Asnieres, in the house of one of the physicians of this hospital—Dr. Griffon, who, notwithstanding some oddities which I deplore, has excellent qualities."

"And she is now out of danger?

"Yes, madame; but only since two or three days. To-day she is allowed to write to her protectors."

"Oh! it is I, my lord, I who will do this, or rather, it is I who will have the joy of conducting her to those who, believing her dead, regret her so bitterly."

"I appreciate those regrets, madame; for it is impossible to know Fleur de Marie without being charmed with her angelic qualities: her grace and sweetness exercise on all those who approach her an unbounded influence. The woman who saved her, and who has since watched her night and day, as she would have watched her own child, is a courageous and determined person, but of a temper so habitually violent, that she has been called La Louve—judge! Well! a word from Fleur de Marie can calm her. I have heard her sob and utter cries of despair, when, at one time, Dr. Griffon had but little hopes of saving Fleur de Marie."

"That does not astonish me—I know La Louve."

"You, madame?" said Saint Remy, surprised; "you know La Louve?"

"It must surprise you, truly, my lord," said the marchioness, smiling sweetly, for Clemence was happy—oh! very happy—in thinking of the joyful surprise she would cause the prince. What would have been her delight, if she had known that it was a daughter whom he believed dead—that she was about to restore to Rudolf.

"Oh! this is so joyful a day for me, that I wish it to be so for others; it seems to me that there must be many unfortunate persons here to succour; this would be an excellent way to express my gratitude, my joy, for the news you have given me." Then addressing one of the sisters, who had just given a drink to Miss de Fermont, she said, "Well, sister, is she yet sensible?"

"Not yet, madame—she is so weak. Poor thing! her pulse can hardly be felt."

"I will wait until she is able to be removed in my carriage. But, tell me, sister, among all these unhappy sick, do you not know some who particularly merit my interest and pity, and to whom I can be useful before I leave the hospital?"

"Oh! madame, it is heaven sends you," said the sister; "there is," added she, pointing to the bed of Pique-Vinaigre's sister, "a poor woman, very sick, and very much to be pitied; she mourns continually about two small children, who have no one to look to for support but herself. She told the doctor just now that she would leave here, cured or not cured, in a week, as her neighbour had promised to take care of her children for that time only."

"Conduct me to her bed, I pray you, sister," said Lady d'Harville, rising, and following the nun.

Jeanne Duport, scarcely recovered from the violent attack caused by the treatment of Dr. Griffon, had not perceived the entrance of the noble lady into the hospital.

What was her surprise, then, when the latter, lifting up the curtains of her bed, said to her, with a look full of kindness and commiseration, "My good mother, you must not be any longer uneasy about your children; I will take care of them; only think of being soon cured, so that you can join them."

Jeanne Duport thought that she was in a dream. In the same place where Dr. Griffon and his students had made her submit to such a cruel ordeal, she saw a lady of surpassing beauty come to her with words of pity, consolation, and hope.

The emotion of Pique-Vinaigre's sister was so great that she could not utter a word; she clasped her hands as if in prayer, looking at her unknown benefactress with adoration.

"Jeanne, Jeanne," whispered La Lorraine, "speak to this good lady." Then addressing the marchioness, she said, "Ah! madame, you save her; she would have died with despair in thinking of her poor destitute children."

"Once more reassure yourself, my good mother—have no uneasiness," repeated the marchioness, pressing in her small white hand the burning one of Jeanne Duport. "Reassure yourself; be no longer uneasy concerning your children; and if you prefer it, you shall leave the hospital to-day; you shall be nursed at home—nothing shall be wanting. In this way you shall not leave your dear children; from this time I will see that you do not want for work, and I will attend to the future welfare of your children."

"Ah! what do I hear? The cherubim descend, then, from heaven, as is written in the church books," said Jeanne Duport, trembling, and scarcely daring to look at her benefactress. "Why so much goodness for me? How have I deserved this? It cannot be possible! I leave the hospital, where I have wept so much, suffered so much! not leave my children any more! have a nurse! why, it is a miracle from above!"

And the poor woman spoke the truth.

If one only knew how sweet and easy it is to perform often, and at a small expense, such miracles! Alas! for those poor unfortunates, abandoned and repulsed on all sides—an instantaneous, unhoped-for assistance, accompanied by benevolent words of consideration, tenderly commiserative, may easily wear the supernatural appearance of a miracle.

"It is not a miracle, my good mother," an-

swered Clemence much affected; "that which I do for you," added she, slightly blushing at the recollection of Rudolf, "that which I do for you is inspired by a generous being, who has taught me to relieve the unfortunate; it is he whom you must bless and thank."

"Ah! madame! I shall bless you and yours," said Jeanne Duport, weeping. "I ask your pardon for expressing myself so badly. I am not accustomed to such great joy; it is the first time it has happened to me."

"Well! do you see, Jeanne," said La Lorraine, weeping, "there are also among the sick some Rigolettes and Goualeuses—on a large scale, it is true; but as to the good heart, it is the same thing!"

Lady d'Harville turned towards La Lorraine, much surprised at hearing her pronounce these two names.

"You know La Goualeuse and a young workwoman named Rigolette?" demanded Clemence of La Lorraine.

"Yes, madame. La Goualeuse—dear little angel—did last year for me—bless her; according to her poor means—that which you do for poor Jeanne. Yes, madame—oh! it does me good to say and repeat to every one, that La Goualeuse took me from a cellar where I was confined on some straw; and the dear little angel removed me and my child to a room where there was a good bed and a cradle. La Goualeuse did this out of pure charity; for she scarcely knew me, and was very poor herself. That was very kind, was it not, madame?" said Lorraine, excited.

"Oh! yes; the charity of the poor towards the poor is holy," said Clemence, her eyes bathed in tears.

"It was just the same with Rigolette, who, according to her means," replied La Lorraine, "offered her services, a few days since, to Jeanne."

"What a singular coincidence!" said Clemence to herself, more and more affected; for each of these two names, La Goualeuse and Rigolette, recalled a noble action of Rudolf. "And you, my child—what can I do for you?" said she to La Lorraine. "I wish the names that you have just pronounced with so much gratitude may bring you good fortune."

"Thank you, madame," said La Lorraine, with a smile of bitter resignation. "I had a child—it is dead. I am in a consumption, and am in a hopeless state. I have no longer need of anything."

"What gloomy thoughts! At your age—so young—there is always some remedy."

"Oh! no, madame, I know my fate: I do not complain. I saw a person die last night—here—with the same disease; it is an easy death. I thank you for your goodness."

"You magnify your danger."

"I am not mistaken, madame; I know it well. But since you are so kind—a great lady like you is all-powerful—"

"Speak—say, what do you wish?"

"I have asked a service of Jeanne; but since, thanks to the good God and you, she is going away—"

"Ah! well, this service—can I not render it?"

"Certainly, madame; one word from you to the sisters, or to the physician, would arrange all."

"This word? I will speak it, be assured."

"Since I have seen the actress who is dead, so tormented by the fear of being cut up after her death, I have had the same fear. Jeanne promised to come and claim my body, and have me buried."

"Ah! it is horrible!" said Clemence, shuddering with affright. "One must come here to know that there are, for the poor, misery and alarms even beyond the tomb."

"Pardon, madame," said La Lorraine, timidly; "for a great lady, rich and happy as you deserve to be, this request is a very sad one: I ought not to have made it!"

"I thank you, on the contrary, my child; it teaches me a misery of which I was ignorant, and this knowledge shall not be fruitless. Be comforted; although this fatal moment may be far off, when it does arrive, you shall be sure to repose in holy ground."

"Oh! thank you, madame!" cried La Lorraine. "If I might dare to ask permission to kiss your hand."

Clemence presented her hand to the parched lips of La Lorraine.

"Oh! thank you, madame. I shall have some one to pray for and bless to the end, with La Goualeuse, and I shall be no longer sad, for after my death—"

This resignation, and the fears for beyond the grave, had painfully affected Lady d'Harville; she whispered to the sister who came to inform her that Miss de Fermont was completely restored, "Is the condition of this young woman really desperate?"

"Alas! yes, madame: La Lorraine is given up; she has not, perhaps, a week to live."

Half an hour afterward, Madame d'Harville, accompanied by Saint Remy, took with her, to her own house, the young orphan, from whom she had concealed the death of her mother.

The same day an agent of Lady d'Harville, after having visited, in the Rue de Barillerie, the miserable abode of Jeanne Duport, and having received the most favourable accounts of this worthy woman, immediately hired on the Quai de l'Ecole two large rooms and a bedroom: thanks to the resources of the Temple, they were furnished in two hours, and the same evening Jeanne Duport was removed to this dwelling, where she found her children and an excellent nurse.

The same agent was instructed to claim the body of La Lorraine, whenever she should sink under her malady, and have it decently interred.

After having installed Claire de Fermont in her apartment, Lady d'Harville set out at once for Asnieres, accompanied by Saint Remy, in order to conduct Fleur de Marie to Rudolf.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOPE.

THE early days of spring approached, the sun began to resume his power, the sky was pure, the air soft and mild. Fleur de Marie, leaning on the arm of La Louve, tried her strength by walking in Dr. Griffon's garden.

The vivifying warmth of the sun and the action of walking coloured with a rosy tint the pale, thin cheeks of Goualeuse; her peasant's costume having been torn in the agitation attending the first assistance that had been rendered her, she wore a dress of dark-blue merino, made loose, and only confined around her delicate and slender waist by a woollen girdle.

"How pleasant the sun is!" said she to La Louve, stopping at the foot of a hedge of green trees exposed to the south, and which surrounded a stone bench. "Will you sit down here a moment, La Louve?"

"Is there any need of asking me if I will!" answered the wife of Martial, shrugging her shoulders.

Then, taking from her neck her shawl, she folded it carefully, knelt down, laid it on the slightly damp gravel of the walk, and said to La Goualeuse,

"Place yourself there."

"But, La Louve," said Fleur de Marie, who had perceived the design of her companion too late to prevent its execution, "but, La Louve, you will ruin your shawl."

"None of your arguments! the ground is damp," said La Louve, and taking the small feet of Fleur de Marie in her hands, she placed them on the shawl.

"How you spoil me, La Louve!"

"Hum! you do not deserve it; always contending against that which I wish to do for your good. Are you not fatigued; Here is a good half hour that we have been walking. Noon has just struck at Asnieres."

"I am slightly tired; but I feel that this walk has done me good."

"You see, you were tired—you could not ask me sooner to sit down?"

"Do not scold me—I did not know that I was so weak."

"It is so pleasant to walk after having been confined to the bed so long—to see the sun, the tress, the country, when one has thought never to see them again!"

"The fact is, that you have been in a very dangerous state for two days. Poor Goualeuse! Yes, now we can tell you that your life was despaired of."

"And then imagine, that on finding myself under the water, the recollection flashed across my mind that a wicked woman, who had badly treated me when I was very little, had always threatened to throw me to the fishes. Then I said to myself, 'I have no good fortune—it is fated that I shall not escape.'"

"Poor Goualeuse! was this your last thought when you supposed yourself lost?"

"Oh! no," said Fleur de Marie, warmly; "when I felt myself about to die, my last thought was of him whom I regard as my 'dieu;' so, also, when I was recalled back to life, my first thought was of him."

"It is a pleasure to confer benefits on you; you do not forget."

"Oh! no! it is so pleasant to fall asleep and dream of one's gratitude, and on awakening to remember it still!"

"Ah! one would go through fire to serve you."

"Good Louve! Hold; I assure you that one of the causes which render me desirous to live, is the hope of conferring happiness on you—of accomplishing my promise; you remember our castles in the air at Saint Lazare?"

"As to that, there is time enough; now you are on your feet again, I have made my expenses, as Martial says."

"I hope that the Count of Saint Remy will tell me, directly, that the physician will allow me to write to Madame Georges. She must be so uneasy! And perhaps M. Rudolf, also!" added Fleur de Marie, casting down her eyes, and blushing anew at the thought of her preserver. "Perhaps they think me dead!"

"As those believe, also, who ordered you to be drowned, poor dear! Oh! the hounds!"

"You always suppose, then, that it was not an accident, La Louve?"

"An accident? Yes, the Martials call them *accidents*. When I say the Martials, it is without counting my man, for he is not of that family, no more than Francois and Amandine shall be."

"But what interest could any one have in my death? I have never harmed any one—no one knows me."

"It's all one, if the Martials are scoundrels enough to drown some one, they are not fools enough to do it for nothing. Some words which the widow made use of in prison, to my Martial, proves this."

"He has been to see his mother, then? this terrible woman!"

"Yes, and there is no more hope for her, nor for Calebasse, nor for Nicholas. Many things have been discovered, but Nicholas, in the hope of saving his life, has denounced his mother and his sister for another assassination. On this account they will all be executed; the lawyers have no hope, the judges say that an example is necessary."

"Ah! it is frightful—almost a whole family!"

"Yes, unless Nicholas makes his escape; he is in the same prison with a monster called Skeleton, who has a plot on foot to escape. Nicholas told this to a prisoner who was discharged, and he informed Martial; for my Martial has been weak enough to go and see his rascally brother at La Force. Then, encouraged by this visit, this wretch has had the impudence to send word to his brother that any moment he may escape, and that

Martial should hold himself ready, at Micou's, with money, and clothes for a disguise."

"Your Martial has so kind a heart!"

"Kind heart as much as you please, La Goualeuse, but hang me, if I let my husband aid an assassin who wished to kill me! Martial will not denounce the plot—that is already a great deal. Besides, now that you are nearly well, La Goualeuse, we are going to start with the children on our tour through France; we will never plant our feet in Paris again; it was painful enough for Martial to be called son of the guillotined! what will it be when mother, brother, and sister are also executed!"

"You will wait, at least, until I have spoken to M. Rudolf concerning you, if I see him again. You have become changed; I told you that I would reward you, and I wish to keep my word; otherwise how can I pay the debt I owe you? You have saved my life; and during my illness you overwhelmed me with attentions."

"Exactly; now I should seem self interested if I allowed you to ask anything for me from your protectors. You are saved; I repeat to you that I have made my expenses."

"Good Louve, reassure yourself; it is not you who are self-interested, it is I who am grateful."

"Listen, then!" said La Louve, suddenly rising; "it sounds like the noise of a carriage. Yes, yes, it approaches; hold! there it is; did you see it pass before the gate? there is a lady within."

"Oh! goodness!" cried Fleur de Marie, with emotion; "I thought I recognised—"

"Whom?"

"A handsome lady whom I saw at Saint Lazare, who was very kind to me."

"Is she aware, that you are here?"

"I do not know! but she is acquainted with the person of whom I have spoken, and who (if he wish, and he will, I hope) can make a reality of our Saint Lazare castles in the air."

A noise of footsteps approaching rapidly was heard behind the hedge; Francois and Amandine, who, thanks to the kindness of Saint Remy, had not left La Louve, came rushing into the garden, crying,

"La Louve, here is a fine lady with my lord; they want to see Fleur de Marie at once."

"I was not mistaken," said Goualeuse.

Almost at the same moment, Saint Remy appeared, accompanied by Lady d'Harville.

Hardly had she perceived Fleur de Marie, than she cried, running towards her and pressing her in her arms,

"Poor dear child! I see you again. Ah! saved! saved miraculously from a horrible death! With what happiness I find you—I, who, as well as your friends, thought you were lost for ever!"

"I am also very happy to see you again, madame; for I have never forgotten your kindness to me," said Fleur de Marie, returning the tender caresses of Lady d'Harville with charming modesty.

"Ah! you do not know what will be the surprise, the wild joy of your friends, who, at this moment, weep for you so bitterly."

Fleur de Marie, taking the hand of La Louve, who had withdrawn a short distance, said to Lady d'Harville, presenting her,

"Since my safety is so dear to my benefactors, lady, permit me to bespeak, through you, their kindness for my companion, who saved me at the risk of her life."

"Be assured, my child; your friends will prove to the brave Louve that they know it is to her they owe the happiness of seeing you again."

La Louve, blushing, confused, daring neither to answer nor raise her eyes towards Lady d'Harville, so much did the presence of a woman of her rank abash her, could not conceal her astonishment at hearing Clemence pronounce her name.

"But there is not a moment to lose," said the marchioness. "I am dying with impatience to take you with me, Fleur de Marie; I have brought in my carriage a shawl and a warm cloak; come, come, my child." Then addressing the count, she added, "Will your lordship be good enough to give my address to this courageous woman, so that she can come to-morrow and say farewell to Fleur de Marie. So, you will be obliged to come and see us," she said to La Louve.

"Oh! lady, I will come, very sure," answered she, "since it is to say adieu to La Goualeus; I should be very sad not to be able to see her once more."

A few moments afterward, Lady d'Harville and La Goualeuse were on the road to Paris.

* * * * * *

Rudolf, after having beheld the death of Jacques Ferrand, so terribly punished for his crime, had returned home in a state of deep dejection.

After a long and sleepless night, he had sent for Sir Walter Murphy, to confide to this old and faithful friend the heart-rending discovery concerning Fleur de Marie, that he had made the previous evening.

The worthy Englishman was overwhelmed; better than any other person, he could comprehend and partake of the profound grief of the prince. The latter, pale, prostrated, his eyes red from weeping, had just made to Murphy this painful revelation.

"Take courage," said the latter, wiping his eyes; for, notwithstanding his firmness he had also wept. "Yes, take courage, my lord—much courage. I offer no vain consolations—this sorrow has no cure."

"You are right. What I felt yesterday is nothing compared to my present sufferings."

"Yesterday, your highness felt the shock; but the reaction will each day be more grievous. Therefore, call up all your energy. The future is sad—very sad."

"And then, yesterday, the contempt and horror with which this woman inspired me! But may God have pity on her, for at this moment

she is before him. Yesterday, in fine, surprise, hatred, fright, so many violent passions smothered within me these elements of despairing tenderness, that at present I can restrain myself no longer—I can hardly weep. And yet now, with you, I can. Hold! you see, I have no strength — I am cowardly — pardon me. Tears again—always—oh! my child! my poor child!"

"Weep, weep, your highness. Alas! the loss is irreparable."

"And so many dreadful miseries to make her forget," cried Rudolf, in a touching tone, "after all that she has suffered! Think of the fate which awaited her!"

"Perhaps this transition might have been too abrupt for the unfortunate, already so cruelly tried."

"Oh! no, no! not so. If you knew with what delicacy—with what reserve, I should have apprized her of her birth; how gently I should have prepared her for this revelation—it was so simple, so easy. Oh! if this were the only question, do you see," added the prince, with a bitter smile, "I should have been composed, and not embarrassed. Throwing myself on my knees before the idolized child, I would have said, 'You who, have been until now so cruelly treated, be at length happy—and for ever happy. You are my daughter.' But no," said Rudolf, "no, that is not it—that would have been too hasty, too rash. Yes, I would have restrained myself, and said to her, in a calm manner, 'My child, I must tell you something that will astonish you much. Yes; imagine that they have discovered traces of your parents; your father lives, and your father is—I am your father.'" Here the prince again interrupted himself. "No, no; this is also too sudden, too abrupt; but it is not my fault that this revelation is always springing to my lips; one must have more self-command— you comprehend, my friend, you comprehend? To be there before your daughter, and restrain your feelings!" Then, giving way again to despair, Rudolf cried, "But to what purpose these vain words? I shall never speak to her again. Oh! that which is frightful—frightful to think of, is, that I have had my daughter near me during a whole day—yes, that day, for ever accursed, on which I took her to the farm; that day, when all the treasures of her angelic mind were revealed to me in all their purity, and nothing in my heart whispered, 'She is your daughter!' nothing — nothing. Oh! how blind, stupid I was, not to imagine this. I was unworthy to be a father."

"But, sir—"

"But, in truth," cried the prince, "did it not depend upon myself whether I should ever leave her? Why did I not adopt her? I, who lament so much for my child? Why, instead of sending this unfortunate child to Madame Georges, did I not keep her with me? To-day I should only have had to extend my arms to her. Why have I not done that? Why? Ah! because one only does good by halves; because one only values treasures when they have disappeared for ever; because instead of raising at once to her true level this admirable young girl, who, in spite of misery and abandonment, was, through her mind and heart, greater, nobler, perhaps, than she ever would have been by the advantages of birth and education. I thought I was doing much for her by placing her at a farm with some good people, as I would for the first interesting beggar that I met in the streets. It is my fault—it is my fault. If I had done that, she would not have been dead. Oh! yes, I am punished—I have deserved it—bad son, bad father."

Murphy knew that such grief was inconsolable, and remained silent.

"I shall not remain here—Paris is hateful to me; to-morrow I go—"

"You are right, my lord."

"We will stop at the farm of Bouqueval. I will shut myself up for some hours in her chamber, where she passed the only happy days of her life. I will have collected with religious care all that belonged to her—the books she commenced to read; the paper she had written on; the clothes she has worn—all, even to the furniture—even to the tapestry of her rooms, of which I myself will take an exact delineation. And at Gerolstein, in the private park where I have raised a monument to the memory of my outraged father, I will have a small house built, in which shall be rebuilt *this* room; there I will go to weep for my daughter. Of these two funeral monuments, one will recall my crime to my father, the other the chastisement which reached me through my child. Thus, then, let everything be prepared to-morrow morning."

Murphy, willing to try if he could not turn the prince a moment from his gloomy thoughts, said, "All shall be ready, sir; only you forget that to-morrow the marriage of Germain, the son of Madame Georges, and Rigolette takes place. Not only have you made a provision for Germain, and munificently endowed the bride, but you have also promised to be present at the wedding as a witness. Then are they to be informed of the name of their benefactor."

"It is true I have promised. They are at the farm, and I cannot go there to-morrow without being present at the ceremony, and I confess I have not the courage."

"The sight of the happiness of these young people will, perhaps, calm your sorrow."

"No, no, grief is selfish, and seeks retirement. To-morrow you will go in my place; and you will beg Madame Georges to collect everything belonging to my daughter. Let a plan of her room be made, and sent to me in Germany."

"Will your highness depart, without seeing Lady d'Harville?"

At the name of Clemence, Rudolf started; he still cherished for her a sincere attachment, but at this moment it was, thus to speak, drowned in the wave of bitterness which inundated his heart. By a strange contradiction, the prince felt that the tender affection of Lady

d'Harville would alone have aided him to support the grief which overwhelmed him, and he reproached this thought as unworthy the fervency of his paternal grief.

"I shall go without seeing the lady," answered Rudolf. "A few days since I wrote her how much I sorrowed for the death of Fleur de Marie. When she knows that Fleur de Marie was my daughter, she will comprehend the grief that seeks to be alone—yes, alone, so that it may be expiatory; and it is terrible, that expiation which fate imposes on me—terrible! for it commences, for me, at the time when the decline of life also commences."

Some one knocked lightly and discreetly at the door; Rudolf started in impatience; Murphy rose and went to see who was there. Through the half-open door, an aide-de-camp of the prince said a few words to the knight, in a low tone. He answered by a sign, and, turning towards Rudolf, said,

"Will your highness permit me to be absent for a moment? Some one wishes to speak to me on business of importance."

"Go," answered the prince.

Hardly had Murphy departed, than Rudolf, uttering a heavy sigh, concealed his face in his hands.

"Oh!" cried he, "that which I feel alarms me. My heart overflows with hatred; the presence of my best friend weighs me down; the memory of a pure and noble love importunes and troubles me, and then it is cowardly and unworthy. But last night I learned, with savage joy, the death of Sarah—of this unnatural mother, who has caused the death of my child. I amused myself in beholding the ravings and torments of the horrid monster who killed my daughter—oh, madness!—I arrived too late. Yet, yesterday I did not suffer so; and yesterday, as to-day, I thought my child dead—oh! yes; but I did not say to myself these words, which henceforth will imbitter my life: I have seen my daughter; I have spoken to her; I have admired all that was adorable in her. Oh! how much time I might have passed at that farm! When I think that I only went there three times; yes, no more; and I could have gone there every day—to see my child every day! What do I say? to keep her ever with me! Oh! such shall be my punishment."

Suddenly the door of the cabinet opened, and Murphy entered; he was very pale—so pale that the prince half arose, and cried,

"Murphy, what is the matter?"

"Nothing, my lord."

"You are very pale."

"It is astonishment—"

"What astonishment?"

"Madame d'Harville!"

"Madame d'Harville? Some new misfortune!"

"No, no, my lord; reassure yourself; she is there in the parlour."

"She here! in my house! it is impossible!"

"I tell your highness, the surprise—"

"Such a step on her part—but what is the matter, in the name of heaven?"

"I do not know—I cannot explain what I feel."

"You conceal something from me.

"On my honour, no. I do not know what she meant."

"But what did she say?"

"'Sir Walter,' and although her voice trembled, her face was beaming with joy, 'my presence here must surprise you very much; but there are certain circumstances so important, that they leave no time to think of appearances. Entreat his highness to grant me, immediately, an audience in your presence; for I know that the prince has no better friend. I should have begged him to come to my own house, but that would have delayed our interview for an hour, which the prince will confess should not have been retarded a moment,' added she, with an expression which made me tremble."

"But," said Rudolf, in a broken voice, and becoming still paler than Murphy, "I cannot imagine the cause of your trouble—of your emotion—of your looks; there is something else—this interview—"

"On my honour, I do not know anything more. These words alone, of the marchioness, have unsettled me. Why, I am ignorant. But you yourself—you are very pale, sir."

"I?" said Rudolf, supporting himself on a chair, for he felt his knees giving way under him.

"I tell your highness, that you are as much disturbed as I am. What is the matter?"

"Although I should die under the blow, beg Madame d'Harville to enter," cried the prince. By a strange sympathy the visit, so unexpected, so extraordinary, had awakened in both Murphy and Rudolf a certain vague and indefinite hope; but this hope seemed so extravagant, that neither one nor the other dared to avow it.

Madame d'Harville, followed by Murphy, entered the cabinet.

Ignorant, as we have said, that Fleur de Marie was the daughter of the prince, Madame d'Harville, in her joy at bringing back his protegee, had not thought she would be able to present her to him without any previous preparation; she had left her in the carriage at the door, as she did not know whether the prince was willing to make himself known to the young girl, and receive her in his own house.

But perceiving the great alteration in the looks of Rudolf, and remarking in his eyes the traces of recent tears, Clemence thought he had met with some misfortune more severe than the death of La Goualeuse; thus, forgetting the object of her visit, she cried,

"What is the matter with your highness?"

"Are you ignorant, madame? Ah! all hope is lost. Your haste—the interview you have so earnestly demanded—I thought—"

"Oh! I entreat you, let us not speak of the object of my visit. In the name of my father, whose life you saved, I have almost the right to

demand from you the cause of the affliction in which you are plunged. Your state of dejection your paleness, alarms me. Oh! speak, my lord; be generous—speak—have pity on my distress."

"For what good, madame? my wound is incurable."

"These words redouble my alarm, my lord; explain yourself, Sir Walter, what is it?"

"Well!" said Rudolf, in a hollow voice, making a violent effort to restrain himself, "since I informed you of the death of Fleur de Marie, I have learned that she was my child."

"Fleur de Marie your child!" cried Clemence, in a tone impossible to be described.

"Yes; and just now, when you asked to see me immediately, to inform me of something that would overwhelm me with joy—have pity on my weakness—but a father, mad with grief at the loss of his child, is capable of indulging in many mad hopes. For a moment I thought—that—but no, no; I see I deceived myself. Pardon me; I am but a miserable, foolish man."

Rudolf exhausted by the violence of his feelings, fell back in his chair, covering his face with his hands.

Madame d'Harville remained stupified, immovable, dumb, breathing with difficulty—in turns a prey to joy, to fear for the effect which the revelation she was about to make might have upon the prince—in fine, exalted by a holy gratitude towards Providence, who entrusted her—*her*—to announce to Rudolf that his daughter lived, and she had brought her back to him.

Clemence, agitated by these emotions, so violent, so diverse, could not utter a word. Murphy, after having for a moment partaken of the mad hopes of the prince, seemed quite as much overcome as he was. Suddenly the marchioness, yielding to an unexpected and involuntary emotion, forgetting the presence of Murphy and Rudolf, sank on her knees, clasped her hands, and cried, with an expression of fervent piety and ineffable gratitude,

"Thanks, my God! be praised! I acknowledge thy sovereign will. Thanks once more, for thou hast chosen me to inform him that his child is saved!"

Although said in a low voice, these words, pronounced in a tone of sincere and holy fervour, reached the ears of Murphy and the prince.

The latter raised his head quickly at the moment Clemence arose from the ground. It is impossible to describe the look, action, and expression of Rudolf, on contemplating Madame d'Harville, whose charming features, stamped with a celestial joy, shone at this moment with superhuman beauty.

Leaning with one hand on the marble table, and compressing with the other the rapid pulsations of her heart, she gave an affirmative nod of the head in answer to a look from Rudolf, which once more we are unable to describe.

"Below—in my carriage."

Save for the presence of Murphy, who, quick as lightning threw himself before Rudolf, he would have rushed at once to the street.

"My lord, you would kill her!" cried the squire, holding back the prince.

"Only since yesterday she is convalescent. For her life, no imprudence, my lord," added Clemence.

"You are right," said Rudolf, restraining himself with difficulty; "you are right—I will be calm—I will not see her yet—I will wait—let my first emotions be controlled. Ah! it is too much—too much in one day!" added he, in a broken voice. Then addressing Madame d'Harville, and extending his hand towards her, he cried, with a burst of inexpressible gratitude,

"I am pardoned! You are the angel of mercy!"

"Your highness restored to me my father—Heaven willed that I should bring back your child," answered Clemence. "But, in my turn, I ask your pardon for my weakness. This revelation—so sudden, so unexpected—has confused me. I confess that I have not the courage to go for Fleur de Marie—my agitation would alarm her."

"And how was she saved?" cried Rudolf. "See my ingratitude. I have not yet asked you this question."

"At the moment she was drowning, she was rescued from a watery grave by a courageous woman."

"Do you know her?"

"To-morrow she will come to see me."

"The debt is immense," said the prince, "but I shall know how to pay it."

"What a happy circumstance, my God! that I did not bring Fleur de Marie with me," said the marchioness; "this scene would have been fatal to her."

"It is true madame," said Murphy; "it is a providential chance that she is not here."

"Now," said the prince, who had for a few moments been endeavouring to conquer his emotions, "now I have self-command, I assure you. Murphy, go and seek *my daughter*." These words, *my daughter*, were pronounced by the prince with an accent we will not attempt to express.

"Are you quite sure of yourself;" said Clemence. "No imprudence."

"Oh! be tranquil. I know the danger there would be for her—I will not expose her to it. My good Murphy, I entreat you—go—go!"

"Reassure yourself, madame," answered the squire, who had attentively observed the prince; "she can come. My lord will restrain himself."

"Then go—go quickly, my old friend."

"Yes, my lord; I ask but for a moment—one is not made of iron," said the good man, wiping away the traces of his tears; "she must not see that I have been weeping."

"Excellent man!" replied Rudolf, cordially pressing his hand.

"I am ready. I did not wish to pass through

the servants' lines *all* in tears, like a Magdalen. But what shall I say?"

"Yes, what shall he say?" demanded the prince from Clemence.

"That M. Rudolf wishes to see her—nothing more, it seems to me."

"Undoubtedly. Say that M. Rudolf wishes to see her, nothing more. Come, go—go."

"It is certainly the very best thing that can be said to her," answered the squire. "I will merely say that M. Rudolf wishes to see her; that will not cause her to conjecture anything—to forsee anything: it is the most reasonable way, truly."

But Sir Walter did not stir.

"Sir Walter," said Clemence, smiling, "you are afraid."

"It is true, my lady; in spite of my six foot stature and my rough exterior, I am still under the influence of violent emotions."

"My friend, take care," said Rudolf; "wait a moment longer, if you are not sure of your self-possession."

"This time, my lord, I am victorious," said the baronet, after having passed over his eyes his Herculean hand. "Really, at my age, this weakness is perfectly ridiculous. Fear nothing now."

And Murphy left the apartment with a firm step and tranquillized air.

A moment of silence ensued; then Clemence, blushing, remembered that she was in Rudolf's house, and alone with him.

The prince approached her, and said, almost timidly, "If I choose this day—this moment—to make you a sincere avowal, it is because the solemnity of this day—this moment—will add still more to the gravity of the confession. Ever since I have known you I have loved you. So long as concealment of this love was necessary, I concealed it; now that you are free, and have restored me my daughter, will you be to her a mother?"

"I, my lord!" cried Madame d'Harville. "What do you say?"

"I entreat you, do not refuse me; let this day decide my future happiness," said Rudolf, tenderly.

Clemence also had loved the prince for a long time; she thought she was in a dream. The avowal of Rudolf, at once so simple, so serious, so touching—made under such circumstances, transported her with an unhoped for happiness; she answered, hesitatingly, "My lord, it is for you to recall to mind the difference of rank—the interest of your sovereignty."

"First let me think of the interest of my heart—of that of my cherished daughter; make us both happy—oh! very happy. Permit me, who, but now was without family, to say, 'My wife—my daughter;' allow this poor child—also without family—to say, 'My father—my mother—my sister;' for you have a daughter, who will become mine."

"Oh! my lord, to such noble words one can only answer by grateful tears," cried Clemence. Then, composing herself, she added, "My lord, some one comes; it is your child."

"Oh! do not refuse me," cried Rudolf, in a supplicating voice; "in the name of my love, say our child."

"Our child," murmured Clemence; at the same moment Murphy opened the door, leading in Fleur de Marie.

The girl, descending from the carriage, had crossed an antechamber, filled with footmen in full livery; a waiting-room, where valets attended; then the ushers' saloon; and, finally, the waiting-rooms, occupied by a chamberlain and the aids of the prince in full uniform. Let the reader imagine the astonishment of the poor Goualeuse, who knew no other splendours than those of the farm at Bouqueval, on traversing these princely apartments, resplendent with gold, mirrors, and paintings.

As soon as she appeared, Lady d'Harville ran towards her, took her by the hand, and placing her arm around her for support, she conducted her towards the prince, who, standing near the chimney, had not been able to move.

Murphy, after having confided Fleur de Marie to the care of Lady d'Harville, hastily disappeared behind the folds of one of the immense window-curtains, finding that he was not altogether sure of his self-possession.

At the sight of her benefactor, her saviour, who regarded her with silent ecstacy, Fleur de Marie, already so agitated, began to tremble.

"Compose yourself, my child," said Lady d'Harville; "there is your friend, M. Rudolf, who awaits you impatiently; he has been very uneasy about you."

"Oh! yes, very—very uneasy," said Rudolf, still immovable, his heart almost breaking at the sight of the sweet pale face of his child.

Thus, in spite of his resolution, the prince was for a moment obliged to turn his head to conceal his emotion.

"Stay! my child, you are still very weak; sit down there," said Clemence, to turn her attention from the prince; and she led her to a large arm-chair of bronze and gilt, in which the Goualeuse seated herself. Her agitation increased every moment: she was oppressed, speech failed her; she had not a word of gratitude for Rudolf.

At length, on a sign from Lady d'Harville, who was leaning on the back of the chair, and holding one of Fleur de Marie's hands in her own, the prince approached softly to the other side of the seat. With more self-command, he then said to Fleur de Marie, who turned towards him her enchanting face,

"At length, my child, you are once more reunited to your friends, and for ever! You never shall leave them more. Now you must forget what you have suffered."

"Yes, my child, the best way to prove that you love us," added Clemence, "is to forget the past."

"Believe me, M. Rudolf—believe me, my lady, that if I do recall it sometimes, it will only be to say to myself, that, without you, I should still be very unhappy."

"Yes; but we will take care that you have

no more such gloomy thoughts. Our tenderness will not leave you the time, my dear Marie," answered Rudolf; "for you know that I gave you this name at the farm."

"Yes, M. Rudolf. And is Madame Georges, who allowed me to call her mother, well?"

"Very well, my child. But I have important news to tell you."

"Me, M. Rudolf?"

"Since I have seen you, great discoveries have been made concerning your birth."

"My birth?"

"It is known who were your parents—who was your father."

Rudolf was so much choked by his tears on his pronouncing these words, that Fleur de Marie, very much affected, turned quickly towards him: he had turned away his head.

An incident, half burlesque, diverted the attention of La Goualeuse, and prevented her from remarking more closely the emotion of her father: the worthy squire, who still remained behind the curtain, and, apparently, was very attentively looking into the garden of the hotel, could not refrain from blowing his nose with a most formidable noise, for he wept like a child.

"Yes, my dear Marie," Clemence hastened to say, "your father is known—he still lives."

"My father!" cried the Goualeuse, with an outburst which put the composure of Rudolf to to a new trial.

"And some day," resumed Clemence, "very soon, perhaps, you will see him. What will doubtless surprise you very much is, that he is of high standing—noble birth."

"And my mother, madame—shall I see her?"

"Your father will answer this question, my child; but shall you not be very happy to see him?"

"Oh! yes, madame," answered Fleur de Marie, casting down her eyes.

"How much you will love him when you know him," said the marchioness.

"From that day forward, a new life will commence for you, Marie," added the prince.

"Oh! no, M. Rudolf, answered the Goualeuse, unaffectedly. "My new life commmenced on the day when you took pity on me—when you sent me to the farm."

"But your father will cherish you," said the prince.

"I do not know him, and to you I owe all, M. Rudolf."

"Then you love me as much—more, perhaps, than you would love your father?"

"I bless you, and I respect you as I do God, M. Rudolf, because you have done for me that which God alone else could have done," answered the Goualeuse, with enthusiasm, forgetting her habitual timidity. "When my lady had the goodness to speak to me in prison, I said to her what I said to everybody—yes, M. Rudolf, to those who were very unfortunate, I said, 'Hope! M. Rudolf succours the unfortunate.' To those who hesitated between good and evil, I said, 'Courage, be virtuous; M. Rudolf rewards those who are virtuous.' To those who were wicked, I said, 'Take care! M. Rudolf punishes the wicked.' In fine, when I thought I was about to die, I said to myself, 'God will have mercy upon me, for M. Rudolf has judged me worthy of his interest.'"

Fleur de Marie, carried away by her gratitude towards her benefactor, had overcome her fears; a slight carnation tinged her cheeks, and her beautiful blue eyes, which she raised towards heaven as if in prayer, shone with the softest lustre.

A silence of some seconds succeeded the enthusiastic words of Fleur de Marie; the emotions which affected the actors in this scene were profound.

"I see, my child," resumed Rudolf, hardly containing his joy, "that in your heart I have almost taken the place of your father."

"It is not my fault, M. Rudolf. It is, perhaps, wrong in me; but, as I have told you, I know you, and I do not know my father, and," added she, holding down her head in confusion, "and then you know the past, M. Rudolf; and yet you have overwhelmed me with favours; but my father does not know it. Perhaps he will regret having found me," added the unfortunate child, shuddering; "and since he is, as my lady said, of high birth, doubtless he will be ashamed—he will blush for me!"

"*Blush* for you!" cried Rudolf, drawing himself up proudly. "Reassure yourself, poor child; your father will place you in a position so brilliant, so lofty, that the greatest among the great of this world will regard you henceforth with the utmost respect. Blush for you! no, no; you will rank with the noblest princesses of Europe."

"My lord!" cried Murphy and Clemence at the same time, alarmed at the vehemence of Rudolf, and the increasing pallor of Fleur de Marie, who looked at her father with surprise.

"Blush for you!" continued he; "oh! if I ever rejoiced and felt pride in my sovereign rank, it is that, thanks to this rank, I can elevate you as much as you have heretofore been abased. Do you hear, my darling child—my beloved daughter? for it is I—I, who am your father!"

And the prince, no longer able to conquer his emotion, threw himself at the feet of Fleur de Marie, whom he covered with tears and caresses.

"God be praised!" cried Fleur de Marie, clasping her hands. "I am permitted to love my benefactor as much as I would have loved him. He is my father. I can cherish him without remorse. Be praised, my—"

She could not finish—the shock was too violent; Fleur de Marie fainted in the arms of her father.

Murphy ran to the door, opened it, and said, "Dr. David instantly for his royal highness; some one is ill!"

"Curses on me! I have killed her," cried Rudolf—in tears, kneeling before his daughter. "Marie, my child, listen to me; it is your father.

Pardon—oh! pardon for not having retained this secret longer. I have killed her!"

"Calm yourself, my lord," said Clemence; "there is, doubtless, no danger. See, her cheeks are tinged with colour; it is the shock—only the shock."

"But hardly convalescent, she will die. Woe is me!"

At this moment, David, the black physician, entered precipitately, holding in his hands a small box filled with vials, and a paper, which he handed to Murphy.

"David, my child is dying. I have saved your life—you must save my child!" cried Rudolf.

Although amazed at these words of the prince, who spoke of his child, the doctor ran to Fleur de Marie, whom Lady d'Harville held in her arms, took hold of the young girl's pulse, placed his hand on her forehead, and turning towards Rudolf, who, pale and alarmed, awaited his doom, he said,

"There is no danger, let your highness be assured."

"You speak the truth—no danger—none?"

"Not any, your highness. A few drops of ether, and this attack will pass over."

"Oh! thank you, David—my good David!" cried the prince, warmly. Then turning towards Clemence, Rudolf added, "She lives—our daughter will live."

Murphy had just cast his eyes over the note which David had placed in his hand; he shuddered, and looked at the prince with affright.

"Yes, my old friend," said Rudolf, "in a short time my daughter will say to Lady d'Harville, 'My mother!'"

"My lord," said Murphy, trembling, "the news of yesterday was false."

"What do you say?"

"A violent attack, followed by a fainting fit, had caused them to think that the Countess M'Gregor was dead."

"The Countess—"

"This morning there are hopes of saving her."

"Oh!" cried the prince, while Clemence looked at him with surprise, not comprehending his altered appearance.

"My lord," said David, still occupied with Fleur de Marie, "there is no cause for the slightest uneasiness. But fresh air is necessary; the chair can be rolled on the terrace by opening the door of the garden; she will then soon recover."

Murphy ran immediately to open the glass door, and, aided by David, he gently rolled the chair into the garden, leaving Rudolf and Clemence alone.

CHAPTER XXII.

DEVOTION.

"AH! Madame," cried Rudolf, as soon as Murphy and David had departed, "you do not know that the Countess M'Gregor is the mother of Fleur de Marie!"

"Great heavens!"

"I thought her dead; and what you are still ignorant of," added Rudolf, with bitterness, "is, that this woman, as selfish as ambitious, loving me only as a prince, had, in my younger days, contrived to lead me into a marriage, which was afterward dissolved. Wishing then to marry again, the countess has caused all the misfortunes of her child by abandoning her to mercenary hands."

"Ah! now, I understand the aversion that your highness had for her."

"You comprehend also why she wished to win you by infamous anonymous communications! Always impelled by her implacable ambition, she thought to force me to return to her by isolating me from all endearments."

"Oh! what a wicked intention!"

"And she is not dead!"

"This regret is not worthy of your highness."

"It is because you are not aware of all the injury she has caused! At this time, when, on finding my daughter again, I was about to give her a mother worthy of her—oh! no, no—this woman is a demon of vengeance in my path!"

"Come, your highness, take courage!" said Clemence, wiping away the tears, which fell in spite of her; "you have a great and holy duty to fulfil. You said yourself, that henceforth the fate of your daughter should be as happy as it had been miserable; that she should be as elevated as she had been abased. For that, you must legitimatize her birth; for that, your highness, you must espouse the Countess M'Gregor."

"Never—never! It would be to reward perjury, selfishness, and the mad ambition of this unnatural mother. I will acknowledge my daughter; you will adopt her, and thus, as I hoped, she will find in you maternal affection."

"No, you will not do that; no, you will not leave the birth of your child in the shade. The countess is of a noble and ancient house; for you, doubtless, this alliance is disproportionate, but it is honourable. By this marriage, your daughter will not be legitimated, but legitimate; and thus, whatever may happen to her, she can be proud of her father, and openly acknowledge her mother."

"But to renounce you—is impossible. Oh! you do not think what happiness it would have been for me, divided between you and my child—my only love in this world."

"Your child remains to your highness: Heaven has miraculously restored her to you. Not to be perfectly happy will be ingratitude!"

"Oh! you do not love me as I love you."

"Believe it, your highness, believe it; the sacrifice that you make to duty will seem less painful."

"But if you love me—if your regrets are as bitter as mine, you will be very unhappy. What will remain for you?"

"Charity, your highness! that admirable sentiment which you have awakened in my heart: that sentiment which has caused me to forget so many sorrows, and to which I am in-

debted for so many sweet and tender consolations."

"Pray listen to me. Be it so: I will marry this woman; but once the sacrifice accomplished, will it be possible for me to live with her, with her who only inspires me with aversion and contempt? No, no; we shall remain for ever separated; never shall she see my child. Thus Fleur de Marie will lose in you the most tender of mothers."

"But there will remain for her the most tender of fathers. By the marriage, she will be the legitimate daughter of a sovereign prince of Europe; and thus, as your highness has said, her position will be as splendid as it was obscure."

"You are without pity. I am very unhappy!"

"Dare you speak thus—you so great, so just—you, who so nobly comprehend duty, devotion, and self-denial? A short time since, before this providential revelation, when you wept for your child with such bitter tears, if any one had said to you, 'Make one wish—one alone, and it shall be realized,' you would have cried, 'My daughter—oh! my daughter—let her live!' This is accomplished; your daughter is restored to you, and you call yourself unhappy. Ah! may Fleur de Marie not hear your highness."

"You are right," said Rudolf, after a long silence; "so much happiness would have been heaven upon earth; but I do not deserve that. I will do my duty. I do not regret my hesitation. I owe to it a new proof of the beauty and noble sentiments of your mind."

"This mind—it is you who have exalted and elevated it. If that which I do is well, it is you whom I praise for it. Courage, my lord; as soon as Fleur de Marie can stand the fatigue of travelling, take her with you. Once in Germany, a country, so calm and grave, her transformation will be complete, and the past will only be to her a sad and distant dream."

"But you? but you?"

"I—I can well tell you that now, because I shall always say it with joy and pride: my love for you shall be my guardian angel, my saviour, my virtue, my future. Every day I will write you: pardon me this demand—it is the only one I shall make. Your highness, you will reply to me sometimes, to give me news of her, who, for a moment at least, I called my daughter?" said Clemence, without being able to restrain her tears; "and who shall always be so, at least in my thoughts; in fine, when time shall have given us the right openly to avow the unalterable affection which binds us—ah well! I swear it in the name of your daughter, if you desire it, I will go and live in Germany—in the same city with you—never more to part; and thus terminate a life which might have been more happy, but which will have been, at least, worthy and honourable."

"My lord!" cried Murphy, entering precipitately, "she whom God has restored to you has recovered her senses. Her first words were, 'My father!' She asks to see you."

A few moments after, Lady d'Harville left the mansion. Accompanied by Murphy, Baron de Graun, and an aide-de-camp, the prince went in great haste to the residence of the Countess M'Gregor.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE WEDDING.

SINCE Rudolf had informed her of the murder of Fleur de Marie, Countess Sarah M'Gregor, overwhelmed by this revelation, which ruined all her hopes, tortured by deep remorse, had been attacked by violent nervous spasms, and a frightful delirium; her wound, hardly healed, reopened, and a fainting fit of long duration had caused her attendants to suppose her dead. However, from the strength of her constitution, she did not sink under this severe attack; a new glimmering of life once more reanimated her.

Seated in an arm-chair, in order to relieve the oppression which suffocated her, Sarah, almost regretting the death from which she had just escaped, was occupied with bitter thoughts.

Suddenly Thomas Seyton entered the chamber of the Countess; he with difficulty restrained some internal agitation; at a sign from him her two women withdrew.

"How are you now?" said he to his sister.

"In the same state—I am very weak, and from time to time almost suffocated. Why did not heaven take me away from this world during my last attack?"

"Sarah," said Thomas Seyton, after a pause, "you are between life and death—a violent emotion might kill you, as it might save you."

"I have now no more emotions to experience, my brother."

"Perhaps—"

"The death of Rudolf would find me indifferent; the ghost of my drowned daughter—drowned by my fault—is there—always there, before me. It is not an emotion—it is incessant remorse. I am really a mother now, since I no longer have a child."

"I would prefer to find in you that cold ambition which made you regard your daughter as a means to realize the dream of your life."

"The frightful reproaches of the prince have killed this ambition; the maternal sentiment is awakened in me at the picture of the extreme misery of my daughter."

"And," said Seyton, hesitating and weighing each word, "if by chance—supposing an impossible thing—a miracle—you were informed that your daughter still lived—how would you support such a discovery?"

"I should die with shame and despair at the sight of her."

"Do not believe that—you would be too much elated with the triumph of your ambition! for, if your daughter had lived, the prince would have married you—he told you so."

"In admitting this mad supposition, it seems to me that I should not have a right to live. After having received the hand of the prince, my duty would be to deliver him of an un-

worthy wife—my daughter of an unnatural mother."

The embarrassment of Thomas Seyton increased every moment. Charged by Rudolf, who was in an adjoining room, to inform Sarah that Fleur de Marie was alive, he did not know how to accomplish it. The state of the Countess was so critical that she might expire from one moment to another; there was, then, no time to be lost in celebrating the marriage *in extremis*, which was to legitimate the birth of Fleur de Marie. For this sad ceremony, the prince had brought with him a clergyman, with Murphy and Baron de Graun, as witnesses; the Duke de Lucenay and Lord Douglas, notified in haste by Seyton, were to serve to witnesses for the countess, and had just arrived.

Time was pressing; but remorse, feelings of maternal tenderness, which replaced, in Sarah's heart, her merciless ambition, rendered the task of Seyton still more difficult. All his hope was that his sister deceived him or deceived herself, and that her pride would be awakened, as soon as she had gained this crown, so long and ambitiously coveted.

"Sister," said Thomas Seyton, "I am in a terrible perplexity; one word from me, perhaps, will restore you to life—perhaps will send you to your tomb."

"I have already told you that I have no more emotions to dread."

"One alone, however—"

"Which?"

"If it concerned your child?"

"My child is dead."

"If she were not?"

"We have exhausted this supposition already. Enough, brother, my remorse suffices."

"But if it were not a supposition? if by chance—an incredible chance—your daughter had been rescued from death; if she lived?"

"You alarm me; do not talk thus."

"Well! then, may God pardon me and judge you! she lives still."

"My daughter?"

"She lives I tell you. The prince is here with a clergyman. I have sent for two of your friends for witnesses; the wish of your life is at length realized—the prediction is fulfilled—you are a sovereign."

Thomas Seyton, pronounced these words, while fixing on his sister a look of anguish, watching for each sign of emotion.

To his great astonishment, the features of Sarah remained almost impassible: she placed her hand upon her heart, and falling back in her chair, suppressed a slight cry, which appeared to have been caused by some sudden and excruciating pain; after which her face became composed and calm.

"What is the matter, sister?"

"Nothing—surprise—unhoped-for joy. At length my wishes are crowned."

"I was not deceived," thought Thomas Seyton. "Ambition rules—she is saved." Then addressing his sister, he said, "What did I tell you?"

"You were right," replied she, with a bitter smile, divining her brother's thoughts; "ambition has once more stifled maternity within me."

"You will live! and will love your daughter."

"I do not doubt it—I shall live—see how calm I am. Where is the prince?"

"He is here." "I wish to see him before the ceremony. My daughter is here also, without doubt?"

"No; you will see her afterwards."

"Now that I have the time, ask, I pray you, the prince to come."

"My sister, I do not know why—but your manner is strange."

"Would you have me laugh? Do you think satisfied ambition has a soft and tender expression? Let the prince come!"

In spite of himself, Seyton was uneasy at Sarah's calmness. For a moment he thought he saw in her eyes restrained tears; after a little longer hesitation, he opened a door, which he left open, and went out.

"Now," said Sarah, "let me but see and embrace my child, I shall be satisfied. It will be very difficult to be obtained; Rudolf, to punish me, will refuse; but I will succeed."

Rudolf entered and closed the door.

"Your brother has told you all?" demanded the prince, coldly.

"All."

"Your ambition is satisfied?"

"It is satisfied."

"The clergyman and the witnesses are here."

"I know it. One word, my lord."

"Speak, madame."

"I wish to see my daughter."

"It is impossible."

"I tell your highness that I wish to see my child."

"She is hardly convalescent—she has been quite ill this morning; this interview might be fatal to her."

"But at least she will embrace her mother."

"For what purpose? You are now a sovereign."

"I am not yet, and I will not be until I have embraced my child."

Rudolf looked at the countess with profound astonishment. "How!" cried he, "you subject the satisfaction of your pride—"

"To the satisfaction of my maternal tenderness: that surprises your highness?"

"Alas! yes."

"Shall I see my child?"

"But—" "Take care, my lord; my moments are perhaps counted. As my brother said, this crisis may save or kill me. At this moment I collect all my strength, all my energy, and I need them much to struggle against the shock of such a discovery. I wish to see my child, or I refuse your hand; and if I die, her birth is not legitimate."

"Fleur de Marie is not here; I should have to send for her at my house."

"Send for her at once, and I consent to all. As my moments, perhaps, are counted, I have

said it. The marriage can take place while some one goes for Fleur de Marie."

"Although this feeling astonishes me, it is too praiseworthy to be disregarded. You shall see Fleur de Marie; I will write to her."

"There, on the desk where I was wounded." While Rudolf hastily wrote a few lines, the countess wiped away the icy sweat which stood upon her brow; her features now betrayed violent and concealed suffering.

His note being written, Rudolf arose and said to the lady, "I will send this to my daughter by one of my aides-de-camp. She will be here in half an hour. Shall I bring with me, on my return, the clergymen and witnesses!"

"You can, or rather, I beg you will do so. Ring—do not leave me alone."

Rudolf rang the bell, and requested the servant who answered the summons to desire Sir Walter Murphy to come to him.

"This union is sad, Rudolf," said the countoss, bitterly—"sad for me. For you it will be happy, for I shall not survive it."

At this moment Murphy entered.

"My friend," said Rudolf, "send this letter immediately by the colonel; he will bring my daughter back with him in the carriage. Beg the clergyman and witnesses to walk into the next room."

"Oh Heaven!" cried Sarah, in a supplicating tone, when the squire had departed, "grant me strength enough to see her—let me not die before she arrives!"

"Oh; why have you not always been as good a mother!"

"Thanks to you, at least, I know repentance—devotion—self-denial. Yes, just now, when my brother said our child lived—let me say *our* child—I felt that I was stricken unto death. I did not tell him, but I was happy. The birth of our child would be legitimatized, and I should die afterward."

"Do not speak thus."

"Oh! this time I do not deceive you—you will see."

"And no vestige remains of that implacable ambition which has ruined you! Why has fate willed that your repentance should be so late?"

"It is late, but profound—sincere; I swear it to you. At this solemn moment, if I thank Heaven to take me from the world, it is because my life has been to you a horrible burden."

"Sarah, in mercy—"

"Rudolf, a last prayer—your hand."

The prince, turning away his eyes, gave his hand to the countess, who placed it between her own.

"Oh! your hands are icy cold," cried Rudolf with affright.

"Yes, I am dying. Perhaps for a last punishment, Heaven does not will that I should embrace my child."

"Oh! yes, yes, it will be moved by your remorse."

"And you, my friend? are you touched? do you pardon me? Oh! in mercy, say it. Directly, when our child shall be here—if she comes in time—you cannot pardon me before her; that would be to teach her how guilty I have been, and that you would not like. When I am once dead, what matters it to you if she love me?"

"Be comforted: she shall know nothing."

"Rudolf, pardon! oh! pardon! Will you be without pity? Am I not sufficiently unhappy?"

"Well, may heaven pardon the evil you have done to your child, as I pardon what you have done to me, unhappy woman."

"You pardon me—from the bottom of your heart?"

"From the bottom of my heart," replied the prince.

The lady pressed the hand of Rudolf to her dying lips in an ecstasy of joy and gratitude, and said,

"Let the clergyman come in, my friend, and tell him that afterward he must stay. I feel myself very weak."

This scene was heart-rending; Rudolf opened the folding-doors, and the clergyman entered, followed by the witnesses.

All the actors in this sad scene were grave and sad; M. de Lucenay himself had forgotten his habitual frivolity.

The contract of marriage between the most illustrious and very puissant prince, His Serene Highness, Gustavus Rudolf V., reigning Grand-duke of Gerolstein, and Sarah Seyton of Halsbury, Countess M'Gregor, had been prepared by the care of Baron de Graun; it was read by him, and signed by the bride and groom and their witnesses.

Notwithstanding the repentance of the countess, when the clergyman said, with a solemn voice, to Rudolf, "Does your royal highness consent to take for wife Madame Sarah Seyton of Halsburg, countess M'Gregor?" and the prince had answered "Yes!" with a loud and firm voice, the death-like countenance of the lady brightened: a rapid and transitory expression of triumphant pride passed over her livid features; it was the last flash of the ambition which died with her.

During this sad and imposing ceremony, not a word was uttered by the witnesses. When it was finished, they all came forward, profoundly saluted the prince, and retired.

"Brother," said Sarah, in a low tone, "beg the clergyman to have the goodness to wait a moment in the adjoining room."

"How do you feel now, my sister? you are very pale."

"I am sure to live now—am I not the Grand-duchess of Gerolstein?" added she, with a bitter smile.

Remaining alone with Rudolf, Sarah murmured, in an exhausted voice, while her features changed in an alarming manner,

"My strength is gone. I feel that I am dying—I shall never see her."

"Yes, yes, calm yourself, Sarah—you will see her."

"I have no more hope—this delay—oh! it needs a strength superhuman. My sight fails already."

"Sarah!" said the prince, approaching, and taking her hands within his own, "she will come—now she cannot delay."

"God has not willed this last consolation."

"Sarah, listen—listen. I hear a carriage—yes—it is she; here is your child!"

"Rudolf, you will not tell her that I was a bad mother," articulated the countess, slowly. The noise of a carriage resounded on the pavement of the court. The countess could not hear it. Her words were more and more incoherent. Rudolf leaned over her with anxiety; he saw her eyes covered with a film.

"Pardon—my child—see my child—pardon—at least—after my death—the honours—of—my—rank—" These were her last intelligible words. The fixed, predominating thought of her whole life returned again, notwithstanding her sincere repentance.

At this moment Murphy entered the room.

"Your highness, the Princess Marie—"

"No," cried Rudolf, quickly, "let her not enter. Tell Seyton to bring the clergyman." Then, pointing to Sarah, who was gradually expiring, Rudolf addded, "Heaven refuses her the last consolation of embracing her child."

Half an hour afterwards, the countess M'Gregor had ceased to exist.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BICETRE.

FIFTEEN days had passed since Rudolf, by marrying the Countess M'Gregor *in extremis*, had legitimatized the birth of Fleur de Marie.

It was Mid-Lent. This date being established, we will conduct the reader to Bicetre. This immense establishment, founded for the treatment of the insane, serves also as a place of refuge for seven or eight hundred poor old men, who are admitted when they have reached the age of seventy, or are afflicted with any very serious infirmity.

On arriving at Bicetre, the visitor enters at first a vast court planted with large trees, and divided into grass plots, ornamented in summer with flower borders. Nothing could be more cheerful, more peaceful, or more salubrious than this promenade, which was specially designed for the indigent old men of whom we have spoken. It surrounds the buildings, in which, on the first floor, are found the spacious sleeping apartments; and on the ground floor, the dining halls, kept in admirable order, where the pensioners of Bicetre eat, in common, most excellent food, prepared with great care, thanks to the paternal solicitude of the directors of this establishment.

To enumerate completely the different purposes for which this institution is designed, we mention that, at the time of which we speak, the condemned prisoners were brought here after their sentence. It was in one of the cells of this house that Widow Martial and her daughter Calabash awaited the moment of their execution, which was fixed for the next day. Nicholas, Skeleton, and several other scoundrels, had succeeded in making their escape from La Force.

We have already said that nothing could be more cheerful than the approach to this edifice, when, on coming from Paris, one entered it by the poor-house yard.

Thanks to a forward spring, the elms and the lindens were already beginning to shoot forth their leaves; the large plots of grass were of a luxuriant growth; here and there the flower beds were enamelled with crocuses, primroses, and auriculas. The sun was shining brightly, and the old pensioners, dressed in gray coats, were walking up and down, or seated on the benches: their placid countenances expressed calmness, or a kind of tranquil indifference.

Eleven o'clock had just struck, when two carriages stopped before the outer gate: from the first descended Madame Georges, Germain, and Rigolette; from the second, Louise Morel and her mother.

Germain and Rigolette had been married a fortnight. We will leave the reader to imagine the saucy gaiety, the lively happiness, which shone in the blooming visage of the grisette, whose rosy lips were only opened to smile or embrace Madame Georges, whom she called her mother.

The features of Germain expressed a felicity more calm, more reflecting, more grave; there was mingled with it a feeling of profound gratitude, almost of respect, towards this noble and excellent girl, who had offered him in prison consolations so sustaining and delightful, which Rigolette did not seem to recollect the least in the world: thus, as soon as Germain turned the conversation on this subject, she spoke of something else, saying these recollections made her sad. Although she had become Madame Germain, and Rudolf had settled on her forty thousand francs, Rigolette had not been willing (and her husband was of the same opinion) to change her grisette cap for a hat. Certainly, never had humility served better an innocent coquetry; for nothing could be more becoming, more elegant, than her little cap, ornamented on each side with orange bows, which contrasted well with her shining black hair, now worn in long ringlets, since she had *time* to put them in paper; around her charming neck she wore a richly-embroidered collar and a scarf of French cashmere of the same shade as the ribands of her cap, which half concealed her fine person; and although she wore no corset, according to her usual custom, her dress showed not the slightest wrinkle on her slender figure. Madame Georges contemplated her son and Rigolette with quiet happiness.

Louise Morel, after a rigid examination and

autopsy of her child, had been set at liberty; the beautiful features of the daughter of the lapidary expressed a kind of sad and melancholy resignation. Thanks to the generosity of Rudolf, and the care and attention which he had caused to be shown her, the mother of Louise Morel, who accompanied her, had recovered her health. The porter at the gate had asked Madame Georges whom she desired to see; she replied that one of the physicians of the asylum for the insane had made an appointment with her and her friends at eleven o'clock. Madame Georges had the option either to wait for the doctor in an office which was pointed out to her, or in the court of which we have spoken. She chose the latter; leaning on the arm of her son, and continuing to converse with the wife of the lapidary, she walked in the garden, Louise and Rigolette following at a short distance.

"How happy I am to see you, dear Louise!" said the grisette. "Just now, when we went to seek you in the Rue du Temple on our arrival from Bouqueval, I wished to go up and see you; but my husband did not wish it, saying it was high up; I waited in the cab. Your vehicle followed ours, so that I now see you for the first time since—"

"Since you came to see me in prison. Ah! Miss Rigolette," cried Louise, "what a kind heart! what—"

"In the first place, my good Louise," said the grisette, interrupting gaily the daughter of the lapidary, in order to escape her thanks, "I am no more Miss Rigolette, but Madame Germain. I do not know if you are aware of it, and I am proud of it!"

"Yes, I knew you were married. But let me thank you again—"

"That of which you are most completely ignorant, my good Louise," replied Madame Germain, again interrupting the daughter of Morel, in order to change the course of her ideas; "that of which you are ignorant is, that I am married, thanks to the generosity of him who has been our Providence—mine as well as yours!"

"M. Rudolf! Oh! we bless him every day! When I came out of prison, the lawyer whom he sent to see me told me that (owing to M. Rudolf, who had already done so much for us) M. Ferrand," the poor creature shuddered, "M. Ferrand, to make amends for his cruelties, had settled some money on my father and me—my poor father, who is still here, but who, thanks to God, gets better and better."

"And who will return with us to-day to Paris, if the hopes of the worthy doctor are realized."

"May heaven grant it!"

"It will grant it. Your father is so good and honest! I am sure that we will take him back with us. The doctor thinks that now a great effort must be made, and that the unexpected presence of several persons whom your father was accustomed to see almost daily before he lost his reason, may effect a cure. As for me, in my poor judgment, it appears certain."

"I dare hardly believe it, Miss——"

"Mrs. Germain—Mrs. Germain, if it is all the same to you, my good Louise. But to return to what I was speaking about: you do not know who M. Rudolf is?"

"He is the providence of the unfortunate!"

"It is true; and what then? you do not know. Well, I am going to tell you." Then addressing her husband, who was walking near her, Rigolette cried, "Do not go so fast, my dear!—you fatigue our good mother; and, besides, I prefer to have you nearer to me."

Germain turned around, lessening his pace a little, and smiled on Rigolette, who playfully threw him a kiss.

"How genteel my little Germain is! is he not, Louise? With that air so stylish! such a fine figure! was I not right when I found him more to my liking than M. Girandeau, the travelling clerk, or M. Cabrion? Oh! speaking of Cabrion—Mr. Pipelet and his wife? where are they. The doctor said they ought to come also, because your father often pronounces their names."

"They will not long delay. When I left the house, they had been gone for a long time."

"Oh! then they will not fail to be here; for M. Pipelet is as punctual as a clock. But let us return to my marriage and to M. Rudolf. Only think, Louise, it was he who sent me with the order for Germain's release. You can imagine our joy on leaving that dreadful prison! We reached my room, and there, aided by Germain, I arranged a slight repast, but a repast for real gourmands. It is true, it was of no great use to us, for when we had finished, we had neither of us eaten anything—we were too happy. At eleven o'clock Germain went away; we agreed to meet the next morning. At five o'clock I was up and at work, for I was two days behindhand. At eight o'clock some one knocked; I opened; who should come in but M. Rudolf. At once I began to thank him from the bottom of my heart for what he had done for Germain; he would not let me finish. 'My neighbour,' said he to me, 'Germain will soon be here; give him this letter. You and he will take a cab, and go at once to a little village called Bouqueval, near Ecouen, on the St. Denis Road. Once there, you will ask for Madame Georges; and I wish you much pleasure.' 'M. Rudolf, I am going to tell you it will be another day lost, and, without any reproach, this will make three.' 'Reassure yourself, my neighbour; there is some work for you at Madame Georges', whom you will find an excellent customer.' 'If that is so, very good, M. Rudolf.' 'Adieu, neighbour.' 'Adieu, and thank you, neighbour.' He went, and Germain arrived. I told him what had occurred; M. Rudolf could not deceive us; we got into a carriage, as frolicksome as children—we, who were so sad the day previous. Well! we arrive. Oh! my good Louise—hold! in spite of myself the tears will come to my eyes. This Madame Georges,

whom you see before us, is the mother of Germain."

"His mother?"

"Dear me! yes, his own mother, from whom her child had been carried off when quite young, and whom she had no hope of ever seeing again. You can imagine their happiness. After Madame Georges had wept much, and embraced her son, it was my turn. M. Rudolf had written many fine things about me, for she told me, as she held me in her arms, that she knew of my conduct towards her son. 'And if you wish, mother,' said Germain, 'Rigolette shall be your daughter also.' 'If I wish it, my children? with all my heart. I know you will never find a better or nicer little wife.' Behold me, then, installed in a fine farm with Germain, his mother, and my birds, which I sent for, poor little things, so that they should be of the party. Although I do not like the country, the days passed so quickly, that it was like a dream; I only worked for my pleasure; I assisted Madame Georges, I walked with Germain, I sang, I jumped; it was enough to make one crazy. At length our marriage was fixed for two weeks ago yesterday. Two days previous, who should arrive in a fine carriage but a stout, bald gentleman, with a very good-natured look, who brought me from M. Rudolf a wedding gift. Just imagine, Louise, a large rosewood box, with these words written in gold on a plate of blue enamel: 'Industry and Virtue, Love and Happiness.' I opened the box; what did I find? some small lace caps like the one I have on, dress patterns, jewels, gloves, this scarf, a beautiful shawl; in fine, it was like a real fairy tale."

"It is true, it is like a real fairy tale; but, do you see, to have been so good, so industrious, has brought you happiness."

"As to being good and industrious, my dear Louise, I have not been so purposely; it has so happened: so much the better for me. But this is not all: at the bottom of the box I discovered a handsome portfolio, with these words, 'Neighbour to Neighbour.' I opened it: there were two packages, one for Germain, the other for me; in Germain's I found a paper, which named him director of a Bank for the Poor, with a salary of 4000 francs; in the envelope directed to me, there was a cheque for 40,000 francs on the—on the Treasury; yes that is it; this was my marriage portion. I wished to refuse it, but Madame Georges, who had talked with the tall, bald gentleman and with Germain, said to me, 'My child, you can, and ought to accept it; it is the recompense of your virtue, your industry, and of your devotion to those who suffer; for it is only by depriving yourself of your usual hours of repose, at the risk of making yourself sick, and thus losing your sole means of subsistence, that you have been able to go and console your unfortunate friends.'"

"Oh! that is very true," cried Louise; "there is no one else like you, at least, Miss —Mrs. Germain."

"Very good! I told the bald gentleman that what I had done was my pleasure; he answered, 'No matter; M. Rudolf is immensely rich; your marriage portion on his part is a testimony of esteem and friendship; your refusal would cause him great sorrow; he will be present at your marriage, and will force you to accept.' What happiness that so much wealth should be in the possession of a person as charitable as M. Rudolf?"

"Doubtless he is very rich, but if that were all—"

"Oh! my good Louise, if you only knew who M. Rudolf is! and I made him carry my bundles! But patience! you shall see. The evening before the marriage, very late, the bald gentlemen arrived, having travelled post. M. Rudolf could not come; he was indisposed; but the tall gentleman came in his place. It is only then, my good Louise, that we were informed that your benefactor, that ours, was —guess what? a prince!"

"A prince?"

"What do I say, a prince? a royal highness, a reigning grand-duke, a king on a small scale. Germain explained this to me."

"M. Rudolf!"

"My poor Louise, yes! And I had asked him to help me wax my floor!"

"A prince—almost a king! That is the reason he has so much power to do good."

"You comprehend my embarrassment, my good Louise. Thus, seeing that he was almost a king, I did not dare refuse my marriage portion. We were married. Eight days afterward, M. Rudolf sent word to us, and Madame Georges, that he would be very happy, if we would make him a bridal visit; we went. You comprehend, my heart beat fast; we arrived at the Rue Plumet; we entered a palace; we passed through parlours filled with servants in livery, gentlemen in black, wearing silver chains around their necks and swords at their sides, and officers in uniform; and then gildings everywhere, almost enough to blind you. At length we found the bald gentleman in a saloon with some other gentlemen, all laced over with embroidery; he introduced us into a large room, where we found M. Rudolf—that is to say, the prince, dressed very plainly, and looking so kind, so frank, so little proud—in fine, he looked so much like the M. Rudolf of old, that I felt myself at once at my ease, recalling to my mind that I had made him fasten my shawl, mend my pens, and give me his arm in the streets."

"You were no longer afraid? Oh! how I should have trembled!"

"Not I, after having received Madame Georges with great kindness, and offered his hand to Germain, the prince said to me, smiling, 'Well, my neighbour, how are *Papa Cretu* and *Ramonette*!' (those are the names of my birds; how kind in him to remember them). 'I am sure,' he added, 'that now you and Germain rival with your joyous songs those of your little birds?' 'Yes, your highness! (Madame

Georges had taught us to say that while we were on the road)—'Yes, your highness, our happiness is great, and it seems to us more sweet because we owe it to you.' 'It is not to me you owe it, my child, but to your excellent qualities and to those of Germain,' and so forth and so forth: I pass over the rest of his compliments. Finally, we left this good nobleman with our hearts rather full, for we shall see him no more. He told us that he would return to Germany in a few days; perhaps he has already gone; but gone or not, we shall always remember him."

"Since he has subjects, they must be very happy?"

"Judge? he has done so much good to us, who are nothing to him. I forgot to tell you that it was at this farm where we lived that one of my old prison companions resided, a very good little girl, who, to her happiness, had also met M. Rudolf; but Madame Georges had recommended me not to speak about it to the prince; I do not know wherefore; doubtless because he does not like that any one should speak to him of the good he does. What is certain is, that it appears this dear Goualeuse has found her parents, who have taken her with them, very far away: all I regret is, not having embraced her before her departure."

"So much the better," said Louise, bitterly; she is happy also—she—"

"My good Louise, pardon me—I am selfish; I only speak to you of happiness, and you have yet so many reasons for sorrow."

"If my child had lived," said Louise, sadly, "that would have consoled me; for now where is the virtuous man who would have me, although I have money!"

"On the contrary, Louise, I say that none but a virtuous man can comprehend your position; yes, when he knows all, when he shall know you, he can but pity you, esteem you; and he will be sure to have in you a good and worthy wife."

"You say that to console me."

"No, I say that because it is true."

"Well, true or not, it does me good, and I thank you. But who comes here? Hold! it is M. Pipelet and his wife! Goodness! how pleased he is! he who formerly was always so miserable on account of the jokes of M. Cabrion."

The Pipelets came forward joyfully; Alfred, wearing his irremovable hat, had on a magnificent coat of grass-green in all its pristine lustre; his cravat, with embroidered corners, just allowed room for a formidable shirt collar, which concealed half of his cheeks, a large waistcoat, of a deep-yellow ground, with brown stripes; black breeches, rather short; stockings of dazzling whiteness, and well-brushed shoes, completed his attire.

Anastasia strutted in a robe of amaranth-coloured merino, over which showed to great advantage a shawl of deep blue. She proudly displayed to all eyes her wig, freshly curled, and had her cap suspended from her arm by strings of green riband, like a reticule.

The physiognomy of Alfred, ordinarily so grave, so collected, and latterly so much cast down, was beaming, rejoicing, sparkling; as soon as he saw Louise and Rigolette at a distance, he ran towards them, crying in his bass voice,

"Delivered—gone!"

"Oh! M. Pipelet," said Rigolette, "how very gay you look! what is the matter?"

"Gone, miss, or, rather, madame, do I, can I, ought I to say, for now you are exactly like Anastasia, thanks to the conjugal! just as your husband, M. Germain, is exactly like me."

"You are very kind, M. Pipelet," said Rigolette, smiling; "but who has gone, then?"

"Cabrion!!!" cried M. Pipelet, respiring and inhaling the air with inexpressible satisfaction as if he had been relieved from an enormous weight. "He leaves France for ever—for ever—for perpetuity—in fine, he is gone."

"You are very sure of it?"

"I have seen him, with my own eyes, get into a diligence for Strasbourg—he and his trunks, and all his effects—that is, to say, a hatbox, a maulstick, and a box of colours."

"What is he singing about there, the old darling?" said Anastasia, arriving out of breath, for she had with difficulty followed the quick movements of Alfred. "I bet he is talking to you of Cabrion! he has done nothing but repeat it over and over again all along the way."

"That is to say, Anastasia, that I could hardly keep on the ground. Before, it seemed to me that my hat was lined with lead; now, one would say that the air raised me towards the firmament! gone—at last—gone!!! and he will never return more!"

"Most happily, the blackguard!"

"Anastasia, spare the absent; happiness renders me merciful; I will simply say that he was an unworthy blackguard."

"And how did you know that he had gone to Germany?" asked Rigolette.

"By a friend of my prince of lodgers. Apropos of this dear man, do you not know, that thanks to his good recommendations, Alfred is appointed porter of a Pawn Office and Bank for the Poor, established in our house by a good soul that I cannot help thinking must be the person for whom M. Rudolf was the travelling clerk in good actions!"

"That happens very well," said Rigolette: "my husband is the director of this bank, for which he is also indebted to the recommendation of M. Rudolf."

"Hooraw!" cried Madame Pipelet, gaily; "so much the better; so much the better! old faces are preferable to new ones. But to return to Cabrion: just imagine that a tall, bald gentleman, on coming to inform us of Alfred's appointment as porter, asked us if a painter of much talent, named Cabrion, had not lived with us. At the name of Cabrion, there was my old darling lifting his boot in the air, and already half dead. Happily, the great

fat, bald man added, 'This young painter is about to start for Germany; a wealthy person sends him there for some work which will employ him for several years; perhaps he may always remain there. As a proof of what he had said, the individual gave to my old darling the date of the intended departure of Cabrion and the address of the stagecoach office, and I had the unhoped-for happiness to read on the register, 'M. Cabrion, painter, leaves for Strasbourg.' The departure was fixed for this morning."

"I went to the office with my wife."

"We saw the knave mount on the imperial, alongside of the conductor."

"And just at the moment the diligence started, Cabrion perceived me, recognised me, turned round, and cried, 'I go for ever—yours for life!' Happily, the trumpet of the conductor almost drowned these last words and the indecent familiarity of his address, which I despise; for, at last, heaven be praised, he is gone."

"And gone for ever, believe it, M. Pipelet," said Rigolette, restraining a violent desire to laugh. "But what you do not know, and what will astonish you very much, is, that M. Rudolf was—"

"Well?"

"A prince in disguise—a royal highness."

"Come, get along—what a sell!" said Anastasia.

"I swear it to you by my husband," said Rigolette, very seriously.

"My prince of lodgers, a royal highness!" cried Anastasia. "Get along!' And I asked him to take care of my lodge! Pardon—pardon—pardon." And she mechanically put on her cap, as if this head-dress were more suitable when she was speaking of a prince.

By a manifestation diametrically opposed as to form, but quite similar as to the reality, Alfred, contrary to his habit, uncovered his head entirely, and saluted the air profoundly, crying, "A prince! a highness in our lodge! And he has seen me between the sheets when I was in bed, in consequence of the indignities of Cabrion!" At this moment Madame Georges turned round, and said to her son and to Rigolette,

"My children, here is the doctor."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

DR. HERBIN, a man of ripe age, had a physiognomy very intellectual and lofty, a look of remarkable sagacity and depth of thought, and a smile of extreme goodness. His naturally harmonious voice became full of kindness when he spoke to the lunatics; thus the suavity of his tone and the benevolence of his words seemed oft to calm the natural irritability of these unfortunate people. He was among the first to substitute, in his treatment for madness, commiseration and benevolence, for the terrible coercive means employed formerly; no more chains, no more blows, no more shower-baths; above all (save in some few cases), no more solitary confinement.

His lofty understanding had comprehended that monomania, insanity, and madness were increased by confinement and abusive treatment; that, on the contrary, by allowing the patients to live together, a thousand distractions, a thousand incidents occurring at each moment, prevented them from being absorbed in a fixed idea, so much the more fatal as it is more concentrated by solitude and intimidation.

Thus experience proves that solitary confinement is as fatal to lunatics as it is salutary to criminals; the mental purturbation of the former increases in solitude, while the purturbation, or, rather, moral corruption of the latter, is augmented and becomes incurable by the society of their brothers in crime.

Doubtless some years hence, the penitentiary system, with its prisons in common (true schools of infamy), with its galleys, its chains, its pillories, and its scaffolds, will appear as corrupt, as savage, as atrocious as the old method of treatment for the insane appears to us of the present day.

"Doctor," said Madame Georges to M. Herbin, "I thought I might be allowed to accompany my son and daughter-in-law, although I do not know M. Morel. The situation of this excellent man appeared to me so interesting that I have not been able to conquer my desire to assist with my children in attempting his complete restoration to reason, which, you hope (so we have been told), will be accomplished by the means you are about using."

"I count much, madame, on the favourable impression which the presence of his daughter and persons whom he has been accustomed to see will produce upon him."

"When they came to arrest my husband," said the wife of Morel, with emotion, showing Rigolette to the doctor, "our good little neighbour was occupied in assisting me and my children."

"My father also well knew M. Germain, who has always been very kind to us," added Louise. Then noticing Alfred and Anastasia, she added, "These are the porters of our house; they have also assisted us as much as they could in our misfortunes."

"I thank you, sir," said the doctor to Alfred, "for having inconvenienced yourself by coming here; but, from what I have been told, I see this visit has not cost you a great deal."

"Sir," said M. Pipelet, with a grave nod, "man should assist his fellow man here below; he is a brother, without counting that Morel was the cream of honest men, before he lost his reason, in consequence of his arrest and his dear Louise's."

"And over and above all," said Anastasia, "I always regret that the porringer full of scalding soup which I threw on the backs of the two bailiffs had not been melted lead."

"It is true; and I ought to render this just homage to the affection which my wife has avowed to the Morels."

"If you do not fear, madame," said Doctor Herbin, to the mother of Germain, "the sight of the lunatics, we will pass through several courts in order to reach the exterior building, where I have had Morel conducted; for I have given orders this morning that he should not be led to the farm as usual."

"To the farm, sir?" said Madame Georges; "is there a farm here?"

"Does that surprise you, madame? I can conceive it. Yes, we have here a farm cultivated by the lunatics, and its produce is very valuable to the house."

"Do they work there without restraint, sir?"

"Yes; and the labour, the quiet of the fields, the sight of nature, are among the best of our remedies. A single keeper conducts them thither, and there is hardly an instance of escape; they go with evident satisfaction, and their slight earnings serve to meliorate their condition. But here we are at the door of one of the courts." Then, seeing a slight shade of apprehension on the face of Madame Georges, the doctor added, "Fear nothing, madame; in a few moments you will feel as secure as I do."

"I follow you, sir. Come, my children."

"Anastasia," whispered M. Pipelet, who was behind with his wife, "when I think that if the infernal conduct of M. Cabrion had lasted, your Alfred would have become mad, and, as such, would have been confined among these unfortunates whom we are going to see, clothed in costumes the most singular, chained by the middle of their bodies, or shut up in cages like the wild beasts of the garden of plants?"

"Do not speak of it, old darling! It is said that those who are mad for love are like real apes when they see a woman: they throw themselves against the bars of their cages, uttering the most frightful cooings. Their keepers are obliged to soothe them with great blows from a whip, and letting fall on their heads immense quantities of water, which drops from a hundred feet high, and that is not a bit too much to refresh them.'

"Anastasia, do not approach too near to the cages of these madmen," said Alfred, gravely: "an accident happens so quickly!"

"Yes, not to say a word of how ungenerous it would be on my part to have the appearance of defying them; for, after all," added Anastasia, with a melancholy sigh, "it is our attractions which make them distracted. Hold! I shudder, my Alfred, when I think that, if I had refused you your happiness, you would be, at this moment crazy from love, like some of these madmen; that you would cling to the bars of your cage the moment you saw a woman, and roar afterwards, poor old darling! you who, on the contrary, run away as soon as they attempt to allure you."

"My modesty is suspicious, it is true; but, Anastasia, the door opens—I shudder. We are going to see abominable figures, hear the noise of chains and grinding of teeth."

Mr. and Mrs. Pipelet, not having heard the conversation of Doctor Herbin, partook of the popular prejudice which still exists on the subject of insane hospitals; prejudices which, forty years ago, were not without foundation.

The door of the court was opened.

This court, forming a long parallelogram, was planted with trees and furnished with benches; a gallery of elegant construction extended on each side: cells, well ventilated, opened on this gallery; some fifty men, uniformly clothed in grey, were walking, talking, or sitting silent and contemplative in the sun.

On the arrival of Dr. Herbin, a large number of lunatics pressed around him, extending their hands to him with a touching expression of confidence and gratitude, to which he cordially replied, saying to them,

"Good-day, good-day, my children."

Some of these unfortunate beings, at too great a distance from the doctor for him to take their hand, came and offered it with a kind of hesitation to the persons who accompanied him.

"Good-day, my friends," said Germain, kindly, shaking hands in a manner which seemed to delight them.

"Sir," said Madame Georges to the doctor, "are these the lunatics?

"These are about the most dangerous in the house," said the doctor, smiling. "We leave them together in the daytime, but at night they are locked up in the cells, of which you see the doors open."

"How? these people are completely mad? But are they ever furious?"

"At first—at the commencement of their malady, when they are brought here; then, by degrees, the treatment begins to produce its effect, and the sight of their companions calms them and distracts their attention; gentle usage appeases them, and their violent attacks, at first frequent, become more and more rare. Hold! here is one of the most violent."

This was a robust and powerful man of about forty years of age, with long, black hair, high forehead, sallow complexion, intellectual expression, and most intelligent countenance. He approached the doctor, and said to him, in a tone of exquisite politeness, although slightly constrained,

"Doctor, I ought in my turn, to have the right of conversing and walking with the blind man; I have the honour of observing to you that there is a flagrant injustice in depriving this unfortunate man of my conversation, to deliver him" (and the madman smiled with bitter disdain) "to the stupid incoherencies of an idiot, who is completely a stranger (I hazard nothing in saying it)—completely a stranger to the least notions of any science whatever, while my conversation might divert the attention of the blind man. Thus," added he with extreme volubility, "I would have told him my opinion on the isothermal and orthogonal superficies, causing him to observe that the equations of

partial differences, of which the geometrical explanation is summed up in two orthogonal superficies, cannot generally be integral on account of their complication. I should have proved to him that the united superficies are all necessarily isothermal, and together we would have sought what superficies are capable of composing a trebly isothermal system. If I do not deceive myself, sir, compare this recreation with the stupid nonsense with which they entertain this blind man," added the lutic, taking breath, "and tell me, is it not a pity to deprive him of my conversation?"

"Do not take what he has just said, madame, for the wanderings of a madman," whispered the doctor; "he handles in this way sometimes the most difficult questions of geometry or astronomy, with an acuteness which would do honour to the most illustrious learned men. His knowledge is great. He speaks all the living languages, but he is, alas! a martyr to his thirst for erudition and pride of learning. He imagines that he has absorbed all human knowledge, and that, by retaining him here, humanity is thrown back into the darkness of the most profound ignorance."

The doctor replied aloud to the lunatic, who seemed to await his reply with a respectful anxiety,

"My dear M. Charles, your complaint appears to me very just, and this poor blind man, who, I believe, is dumb, but, happily, is not deaf, will have great delight in the conversation of a man as learned as you are. I will see that you have justice done you."

"Besides, by retaining me here, you deprive the universe of all human knowledge, which I have appropriated to myself by assimilation," said the madman, becoming animated by degrees, and commencing to gesticulate with great violence.

"Come, come, calm yourself, my good M. Charles; happily, the world has not yet discovered its deficiences: as soon as it shall have become enlightened in this respect, we shall endeavour to supply its wants; and in that case, a man of your capacity, of your learning, can always render great services."

"But I am for science what Noah's ark was for physical nature," cried he, grinding his teeth, his eye looking very wild.

"I know it, my dear friend."

"You wish to put the light under the bushel!" cried he, clenching his fists. "But then I will break you like glass," added he with a threatening air, his face purple with anger, and the veins swelling like cords.

"Ah! M. Charles," answered the doctor, fixing on the madman a calm, piercing, steady look, and assuming a caressing and flattering manner, "I thought that you were the greatest professor of modern times."

"And past," cried the madman, forgetting all at once his anger in his pride.

"You did not let me finish: that you were the greatest professor of time past, present—"

"And future," added the madman, proudly.

"Oh! the great babbler, who always interrupts me," said the doctor, smiling, and striking him amicably on the shoulder. "Can it be said that I am ignorant of all the admiration that you inspire and deserve! Come, let us go and see the blind man."

"Conduct me to him. Doctor, you are a good man; come, come, you will see what he is obliged to listen to when I can tell him such fine things," answered the lunatic, completely calmed, walking before the doctor with a satisfied air.

"I confess to you, sir," said Germain, who had drawn near to his wife, remarking her fear when the madman spoke and gesticulated so violently, "I confess to you, for a moment I feared a crisis."

"Formerly, at the first word of excitement, at the very first sign of a threat, the keepers would have seized, tied, beat, and inundated him with a shower-bath, one of the most atrocious tortures that ever were invented. Judge of the effect of such a treatment on an energetic and irritable temperament, whose force of expansion becomes more violent as it is more compressed. Then he would have fallen into one of those frightful fits of madness which defy the most powerful restraint; exasperated by their frequency, they become almost incurable; while, as you see, by not restraining at first this momentary ebullition, or in turning it aside by the aid of the excessive mobility of mind which is to be remarked among many lunatics, these experimental bubblings are assuaged as soon as they are raised."

"And who is this blind man of whom he speaks? is that an illusion of his mind?" asked Madame Georges.

"No, madame, it is a very strange history," answered the doctor. "This blind man was taken in a den in the Champs Elysees, where they arrested a band of robbers and assassins; he was found chained in the middle of a subterranean cavern, alongside of the corpse of a woman, so horribly mutilated, that she could not be recognised."

"Ah! it is frightful," said Madame Georges, shuddering, never suspecting the truth.

"This man is frightfully ugly; his face has been burned with vitriol. Since his arrival here, he has not spoken a single word. I do not know whether he is really dumb, or only affects to be so. By a singular chance, the only attacks he has had have occurred during my absence, and always at night. Unfortunately, all the questions that have been addressed to him have been unanswered, and it is impossible to obtain any information as to his situation; his attacks seem to be caused by a madness of which the cause is impenetrable, for he does not pronounce a word. The other lunatics pay him great attention; they guide his footsteps, and they like to entertain him, alas! according to their degree of intelligence. Hold! here he is!"

All the persons who accompanied the doctor

recoiled with horror at the sight of the schoolmaster for it was he. He was not mad, but he pretended to be both mad and dumb.

He had massacred La Chouette, not in a fit of madness, but in a fit of fever, such as he had been attacked with at Bouqueval on the night of his horrible vision.

After his arrest in the tavern of the Champs Elysees, recovering from his transient delirium, the schoolmaster had awoke in a cell of the Conciergerie, where the insane are temporarily confined. Hearing every one say around him, "He is a furious madman," he resolved to continue to play his part, and pretended dumbness in order not to compromise himself by his answers, in case they should suspect his feigning insanity.

This stratagem succeeded. Conducted to Bicetre, he pretended to have other attacks of madness, always taking care to choose the night for these manifestations, in order to escape the penetrating observation of the chief physician; the attending surgeon, awakened in haste, never arriving until the crisis was over, or nearly at an end. The very small number of the accomplices of the schoolmaster, who knew his real name and his escape from the galleys at Rochefort, were ignorant of what had become of him, and, besides, had no interest in denouncing him; thus his identity could not be proved. He hoped, to remain always at Bicetre, by continuing his part of a madman and mute.

Yes, always. Such was then the sole desire of this man, thanks to the inability to do harm which paralyzed his savage instincts. Thanks to the state of profound seclusion in which he had lived in the cellar of Bras-Rouge, remorse had taken almost entire possession of his iron heart.

By dint of concentrating his mind upon one unceasing meditation (the recollection of his past crimes), deprived of all communication with the exterior world, his ideas often assumed a sort of reality, as he had told La Chouette; then passed before him sometimes the features of his victim; but this was not madness—it was the power of memory carried to its greatest extent.

Thus this man, still in the prime of life, of a vigorous constitution—this man, who, without doubt, would live many long years—this man, who enjoyed all the plenitude of his reason, was to pass these long years among madmen, without ever exchanging a word, with a human being. Otherwise, if he were discovered, he would be led to the scaffold for his new murders, or he would be condemned to a perpetual imprisonment among scoundrels, for whom he felt a horror which was augmented by his repentance.

The schoolmaster was seated on a bench; a forest of grayish hair covered his hideous and enormous head; with his elbows on his knees, he supported his chin on his hand.

Although this frightful man was deprived of sight, two holes replaced his nose, and his mouth was deformed, yet a withering, incurable despair was still manifest on his horrid visage.

A lunatic of a sad, benevolent, and juvenile appearance, knelt before the schoolmaster; held his large hands in his own, looked at him, with kindness, and, with a sweet voice, constantly repeated, "Strawberries! strawberries! strawberries!"

"See now," said the learned madman, gravely, "the sole conversation which this idiot can hold with the blind man. Yes, with him the eyes of the body are closed, those of the mind are without doubt opened, and he will be pleased if I enter into communication with him."

"I do not doubt it," said the doctor; while the poor lunatic with the melancholy face regarded the abominable face of the schoolmaster with compassion, and repeated, in his soft voice, "Strawberries! strawberries! strawberries!"

"Since his entrance here, this poor idiot has uttered no other words than these," said the doctor to Madame Georges, who looked at the schoolmaster with horror; "what mysterious events are connected with these words, I cannot penetrate."

"Mother," said Germain to Madame Georges, "how much this poor blind man seems depressed!"

"It is true, my child," answered Madame Georges; "in spite of myself my heart is oppressed! the sight of him sickens me. Oh! how sad it is to see humanity under this dreadful aspect."

Hardly had Madame Georges pronounced these words, than the schoolmaster started; his scarred face became pale under its cicatrices; he arose, and turned his head so quickly towards the mother of Germain, that she could not refrain from a cry of horror, although she did not know who he was.

The schoolmaster had recognised the voice of his wife, and the words of Madame Georges told him that she had spoken to his son!"

"What is the matter, mother?" cried Germain.

"Nothing, son; but the movement of this man, the expression of his face—all this has frightened me. Pardon my weakness," added she, addressing the doctor, "I almost regret having yielded to my curiosity in accompanying my son."

"Oh! for once, mother—there is nothing to regret."

"Very sure am I that our good mother will never return here, nor we either, my little Germain," said Rigolette: "it is too affecting."

"You are a little coward;" said Germain, smiling; "is not my wife a little coward, doctor?"

"I confess," answered the doctor, "that the sight of this unhappy blind and dumb man has made a strong impression upon me—who have seen so much distress.

"What a sight, old darling?" whispered Anastasia. "Well! in comparison with you, all men appear to me as ugly as this frightful mad-

man. It is on this account that no one can boast of—you comprehend, my Alfred?"

"Anastasia, I shall dream of that face, it is certain—I shall have the night-mare."

"My friend," said the doctor to the schoolmaster, "how do you find yourself?"

The schoolmaster remained mute.

"Do you not hear me, then?" continued the doctor, striking him lightly on the shoulder.

The schoolmaster made no reply, but bowed his head. At the end of some moments, from his sightless eyes there fell a tear.

"He weeps," said the doctor.

"Poor man!" added Germain, with compassion.

The schoolmaster shuddered; he heard anew the voice of his son, who evinced for him a sentiment of compassion.

"What is the matter? What afflicts you?" demanded the doctor.

The schoolmaster buried his face in his hands.

"We shall obtain nothing," said the doctor.

"Let me try; I am going to console him," replied the learned madman. "I am going to demonstrate that all kinds of orthogonal surfaces in which the three systems are isothermal, are, 1st. Those of the superfices of the second order; 2d. Those of the ellipsoides of revolution around the small axis and the grand axis; 3d. Those—but no," said the madman, reflecting, "I will commence with him on the planetary system." Then addressing the young lunatic, who was still kneeling before the schoolmaster, "Take yourself off from there with your strawberries."

"My boy," said the doctor to the young madman, "each one must have his turn with the old man. Let your comrade take your place."

The young boy obeyed at once, arose, looked at the doctor timidly with his large blue eyes, showed his deference by a salute, made a parting sign to the schoolmaster, and departed, repeating in a plaintive voice, "Strawberries! strawberries!"

The doctor perceiving the painful effect this scene had produced upon Madame Georges, said to her, "Happily, madame, we are going to find Morel, and, if my hopes are realized, your heart will expand with joy on seeing this excellent man restored to the tenderness of his wife and daughter."

And the physician withdrew, followed by the friends of the artisan Morel.

The schoolmaster remained alone with the learned madman, who commenced to explain to him, very learnedly and very eloquently, the imposing movement of the stars, which describe their immense revolutions silently in the heavens of which the normal state is night.

But the schoolmaster did not listen. He thought, with profound despair, that he should never hear again the voices of his son and wife. Confident of the just horror with which he had inspired them, of the misfortune, the shame, the affright into which he would have plunged them by the revelation of his name, he would have endured rather a thousand deaths than have disclosed himself to them. One single last consolation remained to him; for a moment he had inspired his son with pity. And in spite of himself, he recalled to mind the words which Rudolf had spoken to him before he had inflicted this terrible chastisement.

"Each of your words is an oath, each of your words shall be a prayer. You are audacious and cruel because you are strong; you shall be meek and humble, because you shall be weak. Your heart is closed to repentance; some day you will weep for your victims. From a man you have made yourself a savage beast; some day your understanding shall be restored by repentance. You have not even spared what the wild beasts spare, the female and her young. After a long life consecrated to the expiration of your crimes, your last prayer shall be to supplicate God to grant you the unhoped-for happiness of dying before your wife and your son."

* * * * *

"We are going to pass the court of the idiots, and then we shall reach the building where we shall find Morel," said the doctor, on leaving the court where the schoolmaster was.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MOREL, THE DIAMOND-CUTTER.

NOTWITHSTANDING the sadness with which the sight of the lunatics had inspired her, Madame Georges could not but stop for a moment before a railed court, where the incurable idiots were confined.

Poor beings! who often have not even the instinct of the beast, and whose origin is almost always unknown—unknown to all as well as to themselves. Thus they pass through life, absolute strangers to the affections, to thought, experiencing only the most limited animal wants. If madness does not reveal itself at once to a superficial observer, by a single inspection of the physiognomy of the lunatic, it is but too easy to recognise the physical character of idiotism.

Doctor Herbin had no occasion to direct the attention of Madame Georges to the expression of savage brutishness, stupid insensibility, or imbecile amazement, which gave to the features of the unfortunate wretches an expression at once hideous and painful to behold. Almost all were clothed in long dirty frocks, ragged and torn; for, in spite of all possible care, these beings, absolutely deprived of instinct and reason, cannot be prevented from tearing and soiling their vestments, crawling and rolling like beasts in the mire of the courts, where they remain during the day.

Some of them crouched in the most obscure corners of a shed which sheltered them, gathered in a heap, like animals in their dens, uttered a kind of hollow and continual rattling noise.

Others, leaning against the wall, immovable, looked fixedly at the sun.

An old man, of monstrous obesity, seated on a wooden chair, devoured his pittance with animal voracity, casting on either side oblique angry glances.

Some walked rapidly, describing a circle, limiting themselves to a very small space. This strange exercise would last for entire hours.

Seated on the ground, others swayed their bodies continually backward and forward, only interrupting this movement of vertiginous monotony by shouts of laughter—the guttural, harsh laugh of idiocy.

Others, in fine, were almost in a state of annihilation, only opening their eyes at the moment of repast, remaining inert, inactive, deaf, dumb, blind—not a cry, not a gesture announcing their vitality.

The complete absence of verbal or intellectual communication is one of the most gloomy characteristics of a company of idiots. Lunatics, notwithstanding the incoherency of their words and thoughts, at least speak, know each other, and seek each other; but among idiots there reigns a stupid indifference, an isolated savageness. Never do they pronounce an articulate word. Sometimes is heard among them savage laughter, or groans and cries which resemble nothing human. Scarcely can a few among them recognise their keepers; and yet, let us repeat it with admiration; with reverence to the Creator, these unfortunate creatures, who seem no longer to belong to our species, and not even to the animal species, by the complete annihilation of their intellectual faculties; these incurable beings, who partake more of the mollusca, than animated life, and who often thus pass through all the stages of a long existence, are surrounded by tender cares, of which we have no idea.

Doubtless it is well to respect the principle of human dignity, even in these unhappy beings who have only the exterior of men; but let us always repeat, one should also think of the dignity of those who, endowed with all their faculties, filled with zeal and activity, are the living strength of the nation; to give them consciousness of this dignity by encouraging them, and reward them when it is manifested by the love of industry, by resignation, by probity; not to say, in fine, with a *semi*-orthodox selfishness, "Let us punish here below, God will recompense above."

"Poor people!" said Madame Georges, following the doctor, after having cast a last look into the court of the idiots; how sad it is to think there is no remedy for their woes!"

"Alas! none, madame!" answered the doctor; "above all, when they have reached this age; for now, thanks to the progress of the science, idiot children receive a kind of education which developes, at least, the atom of imperfect intelligence with which they are sometimes endowed. We have a school here, directed with as much perseverance as enlightened patience, which already offers the most satisfactory results; by a very ingenious method, the mental and physical capacities are exercised at the same time; and many have been taught the alphabet, figures, and to distinguish colours; they have also succeeded in teaching them to sing in chorus; and I assure you, madame, that there is a kind of strange charm, at once sad and touching, in hearing these plaintive, wondering voices raised towards heaven in a chant, of which almost all the words, although in French, are to them unknown. But here we are at the building, where we shall find Morel. I have recommended that he should be left alone this morning, that the effect which I hope to produce upon him may have greater power."

"And what is his madness, sir?" whispered Madame Georges to the doctor, so as not to be heard by Louise.

"He imagines that if he does not earn thirteen hundred francs in his day's work, to pay a debt contracted with a notary named Jacques Ferrand, Louise will die on the scaffold for the crime of infanticide."

"Oh! sir, that notary was a monster!" cried Madame Georges, informed of the hatred of this man against Germain. "Louise Morel and her father are not his only victims; he has persecuted my son with undying animosity."

"Louise Morel has told me all, madame," answered the doctor. "God's mercy! this wretch has ceased to live! but, be pleased to wait for me a moment, with these good people; I am going to see how poor Morel is." Then, addressing the daughter of the lapidary, "I beg you, Louise, pay great attention! the moment I cry, *Come!* appear at once, but alone; when I say a second time, *Come!* the others will also enter."

"Oh! sir, my courage fails me," said Louise, drying her tears. "Poor father! if this trial should be useless!"

"I hope it will save him; for a long time I have been preparing for it. Come, compose yourself, and remember my instructions!"

And the doctor, leaving the persons who accompanied him, entered into a room of which the grated windows opened on a garden.

Thanks to repose, the salutary rules, and comforts with which he was surrounded, the features of Morel, were no longer pale, ghastly, and wrinkled by an unhealthy meagreness; his full face, slightly coloured, announced the return of health; but a melancholy smile, a certain fixed expression, indicated that his reason was not yet completely re-established.

When the doctor entered, Morel, seated and bent over a table, imitated the exercise of his trade of a lapidary, saying,

"Thirteen hundred francs—thirteen hundred francs, or Louise to the scaffold—thirteen hundred francs—let us work—work—work."

This aberration, of which the attacks were becoming less and less frequent, had always been the primordial symptom of his madness. The physician, at first vexed to find Morel at this moment under the influence of his mono-

mania, soon hoped to make it serve his project; he took from his pocket a purse containing sixty-five golden louis, which he had placed there for the purpose, poured the gold into his hand, and said suddenly to Morel who, profoundly absorbed by his ideal occupation, had not perceived the arrival of the doctor,

"My good Morel! you have worked enough; you have earned the thirteen hundred francs which you need to save Louise—here they are." And the doctor threw on the table his handful of gold.

"Louise saved!" cried the lapidary, clutching the gold eagerly. "I will run to the notary;" and, rising precipitately, he rushed to the door.

"Come," cried the doctor, with lively anxiety, for the instantaneous cure of the lapidary might depend upon this first impression.

Hardly had he said, "Come," than Louise appeared at the door, at the moment that her father reached it.

Morel, stupified, recoiled two steps, and the gold dropped which he had held.

For some moments he looked at Louise with profound amazement, not yet recognising her. He seemed, however, to be endeavouring to collect his thoughts; then, approaching her by degrees, he looked at her with an uneasy and timid curiosity.

Louise, trembling with emotion, with difficulty restrained her tears, while the doctor, recommending her, by a sign, to remain silent, watched attentively the smallest movements of the lapidary's countenance.

He, leaning towards his daughter, began to turn pale; he passed both his hands over his forehead, covered with sweat; then, taking a step towards her, he wished to speak, but his voice died upon his lips, his paleness increased, and he looked around him with surprise, as if he were just awaking from a dream.

"Well, well," whispered the doctor to Louise, "it is a good sign; when I say 'Come,' throw yourself into his arms, calling him father."

The lapidary placed his hands on his chest, looking at himself (if we may so express it) from head to foot, as if to convince himself of his identity. His features expressed a sad uncertainty: instead of fixing his eyes on his daughter, he seemed as if he wished to hide himself from her sight. Then he said, in a low and broken voice,

"No! no! a dream—where am I? impossible—a dream—it is not she." Then, seeing the gold scattered on the floor, "And this gold—I do not remember—am I awake? My head turns—I dare not look—I am ashamed: it is not Louise."

"Come," said the doctor, in a loud voice.

"Father, recognise me! I am Louise, your daughter!" cried she, bursting into tears, and throwing herself into his arms; at the same moment, Madame Morel, Rigolette, Madame Georges, Germain, and the Pipelets entered the apartment.

"Oh! heavens!" said Morel, whom Louise loaded with caresses, "where am I? what do they want with me? what has taken place? I cannot believe." Then after a pause, he took suddenly the head of Louise between his two hands, looked at her fixedly, and cried, after some moments of increasing emotion,

"Louise!"

"He is saved," said the doctor.

"My husband! my poor Morel!" cried the wife of the lapidary, running to join Louise.

"My wife!" said Morel; "my wife and child!"

"And I also, M. Morel," said Rigolette; "all your friends are collected around you."

"All your friends! do you see, M. Morel?" added Germain.

"Miss Rigolette! M. Germain!" said the lapidary, recognising each personage with new astonishment.

"And your old friends of the lodge, too!" said Anastasia, approaching in her turn with Alfred; "here are the Pipelets—the old Pipelets—friends till death? Daddy Morel, here is a great day."

"M. Pipelet and his wife! so many people around me! it seems to me so long since! And, but, it is Louise, is it not?" cried he, with emotion, pressing his daughter to his heart. "It is you, Louise? very sure?"

"My poor father, yes; it is I; it is my mother: here are all your friends—you shall leave us no more—we shall be happy now—very happy."

"Very happy. But wait until I recollect—all happy; it seems to me, however, that they came to conduct you to prison, Louise."

"Yes, my father; but I have been acquitted—you see it—I am here—near to you."

"Wait still—wait— my memory returns." Then he said, with affright, "And the notary?"

"Dead."

"Dead—he! then I believe you: we can be happy; but where am I? how am I here? for how long a time, and why? I do not exactly recollect."

"You have been so sick, sir," said the doctor, "that you have been brought here, into the country; you have had a fever—very violent—delirium."

"Yes, yes; I recollect: the last thing—before my illness—I was talking to my daughter, and who—who then? Oh! a very generous man, M. Rudolf prevented my arrest. Since then I recollect nothing."

"Your disease was attended by a loss of memory," said the doctor. "The sight of your daughter, of your wife, of your friends, has restored it to you.

"And at whose house am I, then?"

"At a friend of M. Rudolf's," Germain hastened to say: "the change of air, it was thought, would be useful to you."

"Very well," whispered the doctor; and addressing the superintendent, added, "Order the cab round to the garden door, so that he shall not be obliged to pass through the courts to go out at the main entrance."

Thus, as often happens in cases of madness,

Morel had no recollection nor consciousness of the alienation of mind with which he had been attacked.

What remains to be told? Some moments afterward, leaning on his wife and daughter, and accompained by a medical student, who as a matter of precaution, was to accompany them to Paris, Morel got into the carriage and left Bicetre, without suspecting that he had been confined there as a lunatic.

"You think this man is completely cured?" said Madame Georges to the doctor, who was conducting her to the principal entrance of Bicetre.

"I think so, madame, and I have expressly left him under the happy influence of this family meeting; I should have feared to separate them. I shall go and see him every day until his cure is perfectly established; for, not only does he interest me very much, but he was particularly recommended to me, on his first entrance here, by the charge d'affairs of the Grand-duchy of Gerolstein."

Germain and his mother exchanged glances.

"I thank you, sir," said Madame Georges, "for the kindness with which you have allowed me to visit this fine establishment; and I congratulate myself at having witnessed a touching scene, which your knowledge and skill had foreseen and predicted."

"And I, madame, doubly congratulate myself upon the success which has restored so excellent a man to the arms of his family."

Some moments afterward, Madame Georges, Rigolette, and Germain had left Bicetre, as well as the Pipelets.

Just as Dr. Herbin returned to the courts, he met one of the superior officers of the house, who said to him, "Ah! my dear M. Herbin, you cannot imagine what a scene I have just witnessed. For an observer like you it would have been an inexhaustible source of—"

"How then? What scene?"

"You know that we have here two women who are condemned to death—the mother and daughter—who are to be executed to-morrow!"

"Doubtless."

"Never in my life have I seen hardihood and unconcern like this mother's; she is an infernal woman."

"Is it not Widow Martial, who showed so much unblushing assurance at her trial?"

"The same."

"And what has she done more?"

"She demanded to be confined in the same cell with her daughter until the moment of her execution. They have granted her request. Her daughter, much less hardened than she is, appears to be softened as the fatal moment approaches, while the diabolical assurance of the widow augments still more, if such a thing were possible. Just now the venerable chaplain of the prison entered their cell to offer them the consolations of religion. The daughter was about to accept them, when her mother, without losing for a moment her usual coolness, attacked both her and the almoner with such frightful remarks that the venerable priest was obliged to leave the dungeon, after having, in vain, endeavoured to address some holy words to this unmanageable woman."

"Upon the eve of mounting the scaffold! Such hardihood is truly infernal," said the doctor.

"Would not one say that this was one of those families pursued by a fatality? The father died upon the scaffold; one son is in the galleys; another, also condemned to death, has lately escaped. The eldest son, and two younger children only, have escaped this frightful contagion. However, this woman has sent for the eldest son, the sole honest man of this detestable race, to come to-morrow morning to receive her last wishes! What an interview!"

"Are you not curious to be present?"

"Frankly, no. You know my opinion concerning punishment by death, and I have no need of such a spectacle to confirm this opinion. If this horrible woman carries her unwavering firmness and assurance to the scaffold, what a sight for the people! what a deplorable example!"

"There is something singular in this double execution—the day has been fixed."

"How?"

"To day is Mid-Lent."

"Well?"

"To-morrow, the execution takes place at seven o'clock. Now the crowd of maskers, who will pass the night at the balls, will necessarily meet the mournful procession on their return to Paris; without speaking of the place of execution, the Barriere Saint Jacques, where will be heard, in the distance, the music at the surrounding taverns; for to celebrate the last day of the carnival, they dance in the wineshops until ten or eleven in the morning."

The next morning the sun rose clear and glorious. At four o'clock, several pickets of infantry and cavalry surrounded and guarded the approaches to Bicetre.

We will conduct the reader to the cell where we will find the widow and her daughter Calabash.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TOILET.

AT Bicetre, a gloomy corridor, lighted at intervals by grated windows, or kind of airholes just above the level of the courtyard, leads to the condemned cell.

This dungeon received its light only from a large wicket in the upper part of the door, which opened into the dark passage spoken of above.

In this cell, with its damp and mouldy walls, its floor paved with stones as cold as those of the sepulchre, were confined Widow Martial and her daughter, Calabash. The sharp face of the convict's widow, stern and immovable, stood out in bold relief like a marble mask, from the midst of the obscurity which existed in the dungeon.

Deprived of the use of her hands, for under her black dress she wore a strait jacket, she asked that her cap might be taken off, complaining of great heat in the head. Her gray hair fell dishevelled upon her shoulders. Seated on the edge of the bed, her feet on the ground, she looked fixedly on her daughter, Calabash, who was separated from her by the width of the dungeon.

She, half reclining, and also wearing a strait jacket, had her back against the wall. Her head was hanging on her breast, her eyes fixed, her respiration broken. Save a slight convulsive movement, which from time to time agitated her under jaw, her features appeared calm, but of livid paleness.

At the farther end of the dungeon, near the door, under the open wicket, a veteran with the riband of the Legion of Honour, with a rough and swarthy face, a bald head, and long gray moustachios, is seated on a chair. He ought never to lose sight of the condemned.

"It is very cold here! and yet my eyes burn; and then I am thirsty—always thirsty," said Calabash, at the end of a few moments. "Some water, if you please, sir."

The old soldier arose and took from a bench a tin pail of water, filled a tumbler, and gave her a drink.

After having drunk greedily, she said, "Thank you, sir."

"Will you drink?" asked the soldier of the widow, who shook her head in the negative.

"What o'clock is it, sir?" said Calabash.

"It will soon be half past four."

"In three hours!" resumed Calabash, with a sardonic and sinister smile, alluding to the time of her execution, "in three hours—" She dared not finish.

The widow shrugged her shoulders. Her daughter comprehended her thoughts, and replied, "You have more courage than I, mother; do you never falter—"

"Never."

"I know it well—I see it clearly. Your face is as tranquil as if you were seated by the fire of our kitchen, sewing. Oh! those good days are so far off—so far—"

"Parrot!"

"It is true: instead of resting there and thinking, without saying anything, I would rather talk—I would rather—"

"Shake off your thoughts, coward!"

"Even if it should be so, mother, every one has not your courage. I have done all I could to imitate you. I have not listened to the priest, because you did not wish it. And yet I may have been wrong—for, in fine," added the condemned girl, shuddering, "*hereafter*—who knows? and *hereafter* will be very soon."

"In three hours."

"How coldly you say that, mother! And yet it is true; we are here, both of us, not sick, not wishing to die, and yet in three hours—"

"In three hours you will have died like a true Martial. You will have seen black, that's all; be bold, daughter."

"It is not right for you to talk to your daughter in that way," said the old soldier, in a slow and grave tone; "you would have done much better to have allowed her to speak with the ordinary."

The widow shrugged her shoulders with savage contempt, and, without turning her head, she continued: "Courage, daughter; we will show them that women have more firmness than these men, with their priests—the cowards!"

"Commandant Leblon was the bravest of the third regiment of Chasseurs; I saw him covered with wounds in the breach of Saragossa, and he died making the sign of the cross," said the veteran.

"You were his chaplain, then?" demanded the widow, with a savage burst of laughter.

"I was his soldier," answered the veteran, mildly. "It was only to let you know that one can pray when about to die, without being a coward."

Calabash looked attentively at this man with the bronzed visage, a perfect type of the soldier of the Empire; a deep scar furrowed his left cheek, and was lost in his large moustache. The simple words of this veteran, whose features, wounds, and red riband, announced calm and tried bravery, profoundly struck the widow's daughter.

She had refused the consolation of the priest, more from shame and fear of her mother, than from callousness. In her restless and dying thoughts, she compared the impious jesting of her mother with the piety of the soldier. Strong in this testimony, she thought she could listen without cowardice, to those religious instincts which even intrepid men had obeyed.

"In truth," said she, with anguish, "why did I not wish to hear the priest? there is no weakness in that, Besides, it would keep off my thoughts, and then, hereafter, who knows?"

"Again!" said the widow, in a tone of withering scorn. "Time is wanting—it is a pity—you would be religious. The arrival of your brother Martial will finish your conversion. But he will not come; the honest man, the good son."

Just as the widow pronounced these last words the door of the prison opened.

"Already!" cried Calabash with a convulsive start. "Oh! they have put the clock ahead! They have deceived us!"

"So much the better—if the watch of the executioner is too fast—your follies will not dishonour me."

"Madame," said the prison warder, with that kind of commiseration which forebodes death, "your son is here; will you see him?"

"Yes," answered the widow, without turning her head.

"Enter, sir," said the warder.

Martial entered.

The veteran remained in the dungeon, the door of which was left open as a matter of precaution. Through the gloom of the corridor, half lighted by the increasing day and by a

lamp, several soldiers were seen sitting or standing.

Martial was as pale as his mother; his countenance expressed deep and profound anguish, his knees trembled under him. In spite of the crimes of this woman, in spite of the aversion that she had always shown for him, he had thought it a duty to obey her last wishes.

As soon as he entered the dungeon, the widow cast on him a searching look, and said to him in a hollow and angry voice, as if to awaken in her son a feeling of revenge,

"You see what they are going to do with your mother and your sister!"

"Ay! mother, it is frightful; but I warned you of it, alas!—I told you."

The widow bit her pale lips with rage; her son did not comprehend her; she resumed:

"They are going to kill us, as they killed your father."

"Alas! I can do nothing—it is finished. Now, what would you have me do? Why did you not listen to me—you and sister? You would not have been here."

"Oh! it is so," answered the widow, with her habitual and savage irony; "you find it all right, do you!"

"Mother!"

"Now you are satisfied; you can say, without a lie, that your mother is dead: you shall no longer blush for her."

"If I were a bad son," answered Martial, quickly, shocked at the unjust harshness of his mother, "I should not be here."

"You come from curiosity."

"I come to obey you."

"Oh! if I had listened to you, Martial, instead of listening to my mother, I should not be here," cried Calabash, in a heart-rending voice, and yielding at length to her anguish and terror, which, until now (through the influence of her mother), she had restrained. "It is your fault: I curse you, my mother!"

"She repents—she curses me; you must be delighted now?" said the widow to her son, with a burst of diabolical laughter.

Without replying to her, Martial approached Calabash, whose agony continued, and said to her, with compassion, "Poor sister! it is too late now."

"Never too late to be a coward!" cried the mother, with fury. "Oh! what a race! what a race! Happily Nicholas has escaped; happily Francois and Amandine will escape you. They have already the seeds of vice: poverty will cause them to grow!"

"Oh, Martial! watch well over them, or they will end like my mother and myself. They will also lose their heads," cried Calabash, uttering a hollow groan.

"He will do well to watch over them," cried the widow, vehemently; "vice and misery will be stronger than he, and some day they will avenge father, mother, and sister."

"Your horrible hope will not be realized, mother," answered Martial, indignantly. "Neither they nor I shall ever more have misery to fear. La Louve saved the young girl whom Nicholas wished to drown; the relations of this girl have proposed to give us plenty of money, or less money and some lands in Algiers. We have preferred the land. There is some danger, but that suits us. To-morrow we leave with the children, and never return."

"Is what you say true?" asked the widow, in a tone of irritated surprise.

"I never told a falsehood."

"You do now, to drive me mad."

"Why? because the welfare of your children is secured?"

"Yes; of the wolf's cubs you would make lambs. The blood of your father, your sister, mine, will not be avenged."

"At this moment, do not talk thus."

"I have killed—they kill me. We are even."

"Mother, repentance."

The widow shouted with laughter.

"For thirty years I have lived in crime, and to repent for thirty years they give me three days, and death at the end of them. Do you think I have time? No, no; when my head falls, it will gnash its teeth with rage and hatred."

"Brother, help—take me from hence; they are coming," murmured Calabash, in a suffocating voice, for the poor creature began to be delirious.

"Will you hush?" said the widow, exasperated by the weakness of Calabash; "will you hush? Oh! the wretch! and she *my* daughter! pah!"

"Mother! mother!" cried Martial, tortured by this horrible scene, "why did you send for me?"

"Because I thought to give you a heart and revenge: but who has not the one has not the other, coward!"

"My mother!"

"Coward, I say!"

At this moment a tramp of footsteps was heard in the corridor. The veteran looked at his watch, and stood up.

The rising sun, dazzling and radiant, shot suddenly a golden beam of light through the grated window of the corridor opposite the door of the dungeon.

This door was thrown open, and two keepers appeared, bringing two chairs; then the jailor came, and said to the widow, in an agitated voice,

"Madame, it is time."

The widow stood up, impassible; Calabash uttered piercing screams.

Four men entered. Three of them roughly clad, held in their hands small coils of very fine but strong cord. The tallest of these four men, neatly dressed in black, wearing a round hat and a white cravat, handed a paper to the jailer.

This man was the executioner.

The paper was a receipt for two women fit to be guillotined. The executioner took possession of these two of God's creatures; from that time he was answerable.

To the frightful despair of Calabash had succeeded a helpless torpor. Two of the assistants were obliged to seat her on her bed, and to sustain her. Her jaws, clinched by convulsions, hardly allowed her to utter some unmeaning words; she rolled around in vacancy her dull and almost sightless eyes; her chin fell upon her breast, and, without the assistance of the two deputies, her body would have sunk to the ground like an inert mass.

Martial (after having for a long time embraced this unfortunate being), alarmed, not daring nor able to move a step, and as if fascinated by the scene, remained immovable.

The brazen hardihood of the widow did not forsake her; with her head erect and thrown back, she assisted to take off the waistcoat, which impeded her movements. It fell to the ground, and she remained in her old dress of black woollen.

"Where must I place myself?" she asked in a firm voice.

"Have the kindness to seat yourself in one these two chairs," said the executioner, pointing to them.

The door being left open, several of the keepers, the governor of the prison, and some privileged persons, were seen standing in the corridor.

The widow walked with a firm and bold step to the place indicated, passing near her daughter, when she stopped, and said in a voice slightly broken,

"Daughter, kiss me!"

At the voice, Calabash was aroused from her apathy, drew up on her seat, and, with a gesture of malediction, she cried,

"If there is eternal fire, descend into it, accursed!"

"My child, embrace me!" said the widow again, making a step towards her daughter.

"Do not approach me! you have ruined me!" murmured the unfortunate, throwing out her hands as if to repulse her mother.

"Forgive me!"

"No, no!" said Calabash, in a convulsed voice; and this effort having exhausted her strength, she fell back, almost without consciousness, into the arms of the assistants.

A shade passed over the impassible face of the widow; for a moment her dry and burning eyes became moistened. At this instant she met the eyes of her son.

After a moment's hesitation, and as if she yielded to the effect of an inward struggle, she said to him, "And you?"

Martial threw himself sobbing into the arms of his mother.

"Enough!" said the widow, overcoming her emotion, and disengaging herself from the embraces of her son. "He is waiting," she added, pointing to the executioner.

Then she walked rapidly towards the chair, where she resolutely seated herself.

The spark of maternal sensibility, which had for a moment lighted up the dark recesses of this corrupted heart was extinguished for ever.

"Sir," said the veteran to Martial, approaching him with interest, "do not remain here. Come, come."

Martial, stupified with horror and alarm, mechanically followed the soldier.

Two of the assistants had carried the wretched Calabash to the other chair; one of them sustained the almost lifeless body, while the other, by means of whip cord, exceedingly fine, but very long, tied her hands behind her back, and also fastened her feet together by the ankles, allowing slack enough to enable her to walk slowly.

The executioner and his other assistant performed the same operation on the widow, whose features underwent no alteration; only from time to time she coughed slightly.

When the condemned were thus prevented from offering any resistance, the executioner, drawing from his pocket a long pair of scifsors, said to her with marked politeness,

"Have the goodness to bend your head."

The widow obeyed saying,

"We are good customers; you have had my husband: now here are his wife and daughter."

Without replying, the executioner gathered in his left hand the long gray hair of the condemned, and commenced cutting it short—very short, particularly about the neck.

"This makes the third time that I have had my hair dressed in my lifetime," said the widow, with a horrible laugh: "the day of my first communion, when they put on my veil: the day of my marriage, when they put on my orange blossoms; and now to-day—the headdress of death!"

The executioner remained silent.

The hair of the condemned being thick and coarse, the opearation was so long in being performed, that Calabash's lay strewed upon the ground before her mother's was half finished.

"You do not know of what I am thinking?" said the widow, after having looked at her daughter again.

The executioner continued to keep silent.

Nothing could be heard but the snipping of the scissors and the kind of rattling which from time to time escaped from the throat of Calabash.

At this moment was seen in the corridor a priest of venerable appearance, who approached the governor, and spoke a few words to him in a low tone. The chaplain came to make a last effort to soften the heart of the widow.

"I think," resumed the widow at the end of some moments, and seeing that the executioner did not reply, "I think that at five years old, my daughter, whose head is to be cut off, was the handsomest child that I ever saw. She had flaxen hair and rosy cheeks. Then, who would have told me that—" After a pause, she cried, with a burst of laughter, and an expression impossible to be described, "What a comedy is fate!"

At this moment the last locks of the condemned fell upon her shoulders.

"It is finished, madame," said the executioner, politely.

"Thank you. I recommend to you my son Nicholas," said the widow; "you will dress his hair some of these days."

A keeper came and whispered a few words to her.

"No; I have already said no," answered she, roughly. The priest heard these words, raised his eyes towards heaven, clasped his hands, and disappeared.

"Madame, we are going to set out; will you take something?" said the executioner, obsequiously. "Thank you; to-night I will take a drink of sawdust."

And the widow after this new sarcasm, stood up erect. Although her step was firm and resolute, the executioner obligingly wished to assist her; she made a gesture of impatience and said, in a harsh and imperious tone,

"Do not touch me; I have a firm step and a good eye. On the scaffold you will see I have a good voice, and if I speak words of repenttance."

And the widow leaving the dungeon, escorted by the executioner and an assistant, entered the corridor. The two other assistants were obliged to carry Calabash in a chair: she was dying. After having traversed the whole length of the corridor, the funeral procession ascended the stone staircase, which conducted to a court on the outside.

The sun, with its warm and golden light, gilded the tops of the high white walls which surrounded the court, and strangely contrasted with the pure blue of the sky.

The air was soft and balmy; never was a spring morning more smiling, more magnificent. In this court were seen a detachment of police, a cab, and a long, narrow vehicle, painted yellow, drawn by three post-horses, which neighed gaily, shaking little bells on their harness.

This vehicle was entered from behind like an omnibus. This was the cause of a last joke from the window.

"The conductor will not say *full*," said she, as she mounted the step as lightly as the cord which confined her ankles would allow.

Calabash, expiring, sustained by an assistant, was placed in the carriage opposite her mother, and the door was closed.

The hackney-coachman had fallen asleep; the executioner shook him.

"Excuse me, citizen," said he, descending hastily from his seat; "but a night in Mid-Lent is rough. I had just taken to Vendanges de Bourgogne a load of maskers, who were singing, '*La mere Godichon*,' when you engaged me by the hour. I—"

"Enough. Follow this vehicle to the Boulevard St. Jacques."

"Excuse me, citizen. An hour ago I was going to the 'Vendanges;' now to the guillotine! That proves that, as the saying is, there are queer ups and downs in life!"

The two vehicles, preceded and followed by the gendarmes, left Bicetre and took the road to Paris.

* * * * *

We have presented the picture of the toilette of the condemned in all its frightful reality, because it seems to us that we can derive from it powerful arguments.

Against punishment of death.

Against the manner in which it is applied.

Against the effects which must be expected from such an example given to the populace.

The toilette, although divested of that solemnity, at once imposing and religious, which ought, at least, to surround all the acts of the highest punishment known to the laws, is the most impressive of all the ceremonies attending the execution of a criminal, and yet it is concealed from the multitude.

In Spain, on the contrary, the condemned remains exposed during three days in a "*chapelle ardente*;" his coffin is continually before his eyes; the priests say the prayers for the dying; the bells of the church night and day ring a funeral knell.

It will be conceived that this kind of initiation to death may alarm the most hardened criminals, and inspire with salutary terror the crowd which surrounds the "*chapelle mortuaire*."

Then the day of the execution is a day of public mourning; the bells of all the churches toll; the condemned is slowly conducted to the scaffold, with mournful and imposing pomp; his coffin is carried before him; the priests, walking at his side, chant the prayers for the dead; then comes the religious brotherhood; and, finally, the mendicant friars, asking from the crowd, money for prayers for the repose of the culprit's soul. The crowd never remains deaf to this appeal.

Without doubt, all this is frightful, but it is logical and imposing. It shows that they do not cut off from this world a creature of God, full of life and strength, as they would slaughter an ox. It causes the multitude to reflect (who always judge of the crime by the magnitude of the punishment) that homicide is a fearful offence, since its punishment disturbs, afflicts, and sets in commotion a whole city.

Again, this dreadful spectacle may cause serious reflections, inspire salutary alarms; and that which is barbarous in this human sacrifice, is at least hidden by the awful majesty of its execution.

But, we ask, the events taking place exactly as we have described them (and sometimes even *less seriously*), what kind of an example can it afford?

Early in the morning, the condemned is bound and thrown into a closed carriage; the postillion whips up his horses, reaches the scaffold; the axe descends, and a head falls into a basket, in the midst of the most atrocious jeerings of the vilest of a vile populace!

Finally, in a hasty and secret execution, where is the example? where is the terror? And then, as the execution takes place, as we may say, privately, in a by-place, with great precipitation, the whole town is ignorant of this bloody and solemn act; nothing announce.

that, on this day, they are *killing a man*; they laugh and sing at the theatres; the multitudes pass on, careless and indifferent. As it regards society, religion, and humanity, this judicial homicide, committed in the name of the *interests of all*, is, however, something which ought to be of importance *to all*. In fine, let us say it again, say it always, here is the sword, but where is the crown?

Beside the punishment show the recompense; then only will the lesson be complete and fruitful. If, on the day following this morn of sorrow and of death, the people, who have seen the blood of a great criminal redden the scaffold, should see the truly virtuous man honoured and rewarded, they would dread as much the punishment of the first, as they would ambitiously covet the triumphs of the last: terror hardly prevents crime, never does it inspire virtue.

Does any one consider the effect of capital punishment on the criminals themselves? Either they brave it with reckless impudence; or, inanimate, they suffer it, half dead with terror; or they offer their heads with profound and sincere repentance.

Now, the punishment is insufficient for those who defy it;

Useless for those who are already morally dead;

Excessive for those who repent with sincerity.

Let us repeat it: society does not kill the murderer to cause him suffering, or to inflict the *lex talionis*; it kills him to prevent him from doing harm: it kills him that the example of his punishment may serve as a warning to murderers *to come*.

We think that the punishment is barbarous, and that it does not sufficiently terrify.

If this assertion is doubted, we will recall many proved facts of the deep horror expressed by hardened criminals for solitary confinement.

Is it not known that some have committed murders in order to be condemned to death, preferring this punishment to a cell? What, then, would be their horror, when *blindness*, joined to solitary confinement, would deprive them of the hope of escape—a hope which he preserves, and which he sometimes realizes, even in a dungeon and loaded with irons.

And touching this matter, we also think that the abolishment of capital punishment will be one of the forced consequences of solitary confinement; the alarm with which this punishment inspires the generation who at this moment people the prisons and the galleys being such, that many among these incorrigibles prefer to incur the highest penalty known to the law, than imprisonment in a cell; then, doubtless, the punishment of death ought to be suppressed, in order to sweep away this last and frightful alternative.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MARTIAL AND THE SLASHER.

BEFORE we pursue our narrative, let us say a few words touching the recently-established connexion between the Slasher and Martial.

As soon as Germain had left the prison, the Slasher, who easily proved that he had robbed himself, confessed to the judge the reason of this singular deceit, and was set at liberty after receiving a severe and just reproof from the magistrate.

Not having then recovered Fleur de Marie, and wishing to recompense the Slasher (to whom he already owed his life) for this new act of devotion, Rudolf, to crown the happiness of his rude protegee, had lodged him in the Mansion of the Rue Plumet, promising him to take him in his train when he returned to Germany. We have already said that the Slasher felt for Rudolf the instinctive, faithful attachment of a dog for his master. To live under the same roof with the prince; to see him sometimes; to await with impatience a new opportunity of sacrificing himself for his interests, were the limits of the ambition and happiness of the Slasher, who preferred a thousand times this situation, to money and the possession of the farm at Algiers, which Rudolf had placed at his disposal.

But when the prince had discovered his daughter, all was changed: notwithstanding his lively gratitude towards the man to whom he owed his life, he could not resolve to take with him to Germany this witness of Fleur de Marie's first shame. Determined in any other manner to satisfy the wishes of the Slasher, he sent for him for the last time, and told him that he expected a new service from his attachment. At these words, the Slasher's face brightened, but it soon became clouded when he learned that not only must he not follow the prince to Germany, but that it was necessary for him to leave the hotel that very day.

It is useless to speak of the brilliant compensations that Rudolf offered to the Slasher: the money that was designed for him—the deed for the farm in Algiers—anything more that he wished: all was at his disposal. The Slasher, cut to the heart, refused all; and, for the first time in his life perhaps, this man shed tears. It had needed all the persuasion of Rudolf to induce him to accept his previous gifts.

The next day the prince sent for La Louve and Martial; and, without informing them that Fleur de Marie was his daughter, he asked them what he could do for them; all their wishes should be accomplished. Perceiving their hesitation, and remembering what Fleur de Marie had told him about the slightly uncivilized tastes of La Louve and her husband, he offered them either a considerable amount of money, or the half of this amount, and lands in the vicinity of the farm which he had bought for the Slasher. Both of them rugged,

energetic; both endowed with good natural impulses, sympathized the better with each other, since they each had reasons to seek solitude—the one for her past life, the other for the crimes of his family.

He was not deceived: Martial and La Louve accepted his offer with transport; then having, through the intervention of Murphy, made the acquaintance of the Slasher, they mutually congratulated each other on the agreeable prospects before them in Algiers.

Notwithstanding the deep sadness into which he was plunged; or, rather, in consequence of this sadness, the Slasher, affected by the cordial advances of Martial and his wife, responded to them with warmth. In a short time a sincere friendship united the future colonists: persons of their temperament form very sudden attachments. La Louve and Martial, being unable, in spite of their kind attentions, to divert the melancholy of their new friend, discontinued their efforts, trusting that the voyage, and the active employment of their future life, would change his thoughts; for, once in Algiers, they would be obliged to turn their attention to the cultivation of the lands which had been bestowed upon them.

These facts established, it will be understood that, informed of the painful interview that Martial was obliged to undergo in obedience to the last wishes of his mother, the Slasher had wished to accompany his new friend to the gate of Bicetre, where he awaited him in the coach which had brought them, and which took them back to Paris, after Martial, deeply agitated, had left the dungeon, where the terrible preparations for the execution of mother and sister were being made.

The physiognomy of the Slasher was completely altered; the expression of boldness and of happiness which ordinarily characterized his manly face, was replaced with sorrowful dejection: his voice, also, had lost somewhat of its roughness. Grief until now a stranger to him, had broken, prostrated his energetic nature.

He looked at Martial with compassion.

"Cheer up," said the Slasher to him; "you have done all that a brave fellow could do—it is all over; think of your wife, of those children whom you have prevented from following the bad example of their parents; and then, besides, this evening we shall have quitted Paris, never to return; and you will never again hear of that which afflicts you."

"It is all the same, do you see, Slasher. After all, it is my mother and my sister."

"But what would you—this has happened; and its no use crying over spilt milk," said the Slasher, suppressing a sigh.

After a moment's silence, Martial said to him, cordially,

"I, also, ought to console you, my poor fellow—always this melancholy." "Always, Martial." "Well, my wife and I confidently hope that, once away from Paris, it will be dissipated." "Yes," said the Slasher, at the expiration of a few seconds, and hardly restraining a shudder, "if I leave Paris—" "But we set out this evening." That is to say, *you*—you go this evening." "And you, then, have you changed your intention recently?" "No." "Well, what then?"

The Slasher again remained silent; then he replied, struggling to preserve his calmness,

"Hold, Martial: I know that you will laugh at me; but I wish to tell you all, so that, if anything should happen to me, this, at least, will prove that I was not deceived."

"What is it, then?"

"When M. Rudolf asked if it would be agreeable for us to go together to Algiers, and to be neighbours there, I did not wish to deceive either you or your wife. I told you what I had been."

"Let us speak no more about that. You have undergone your punishment—you are as good as the best of us. But I can conceive that, like me, you would prefer to live abroad, thanks to our generous protector, than to remain here, where, no matter how honest, and how easy in our circumstances we may be, we shall always be reproached, you for the crime which you have expiated, and which you still regret, and I for the crimes of my parents, for which I am not responsible. But between us, the past is gone, and gone for ever. Be tranquillized; we rely upon you, as you may rely upon us."

"Between us, perhaps, the past will be forgotten; but, as I said to M. Rudolf, Martial, there is a Providence above, and I have killed a man."

"It is a great misfortune; but at the time, you did not know what you were doing—you were not yourself; and, besides, you have saved the lives of others, and that ought to count in your favour."

"Listen Martial: I have now spoken to you of my unhappiness, because, formerly, I often had a dream, in which I saw the sergeant whom I killed; for a long time I have not had this dream, and last night I dreamed it."

"It was chance."

"No, this forebodes that some misfortune will happen to me this day."

"You are unreasonable, my good comrade."

"I have a presentiment that I shall never quit Paris."

"Once more, you have not common sense. Your sorrow at the thought of quitting our benefactor, the knowledge that you were to accompany me to-day to Bicetre, where so painful an interview awaited me; all this agitated you last night; hence, naturally, your dream returned to you."

The Slasher sadly shook his head.

"It has returned to me on the night before the departure of M. Rudolf, for it is to-day that he goes."

"To-day?"

"Yes; yesterday I sent a messenger to his hotel, not daring to go there myself; he has forbidden it. They told him that the prince

would set out this morning, at eleven o'clock, by the Barriere Charenton. Thus, when we shall have arrived in Paris, I will post myself there, to endeavour to see him for this last time !—the last !"

"He appears so good that I comprehend well how you must love him."

"Love him !" said the Slasher, with deep and passionate emotion; "oh, yes ! Do you understand, Martial? to sleep on the ground —to eat black bread—to be his dog; but to be where he is, I ask nothing more—that was too much—he did not wish it."

"He has been so generous to you !"

"It is not that which makes me love him so much—it is because he said to me that I had a heart and honour ! yes, and at a time when I was as ferocious as a wild beast, when I despised myself as the vilest of the vile, he made me comprehend that there was still some good in me, since, my punishment, inflicted, I had repented, and after having suffered the utmost extremity of want without being guilty of theft, I had industriously laboured to gain an honest livelihood; wishing to injure no one, although every one looked upon me as a finished scoundrel, which was not very encouraging. It is true, in most instances, all that is necessary to keep one in the right path are words of encouragement and kindness. Is it not so, Martial? So when M. Rudolf said these words to me, my heart beat high and proudly. Since then I would go through fire to do a good action. Oh, that the opportunity might offer? you would see—and to whom the thanks?—the thanks to M. Rudolf."

"Truly, since you are a thousand times better than you used to be, you should not have such evil presentiments. Your dream signifies nothing."

"Well, we shall see. I do not purposely search for a misfortune; there can be for me, no greater one than that which has already happened; never to see him more. M. Rudolf ! I who thought never more to quit him. In my sphere, I would have been at his service, body and soul, always ready. Well, perhaps he is wrong. You know, Martial, that I am but an earth-worm in comparison with him; well, sometimes it happens that the most insignificant can be useful to the most powerful. If that should be the case, I would never pardon him for depriving himself of my services."

"Who knows? one day, perhaps, he will recall you."

"Oh ! no ! he said to me, 'My good fellow, you must promise me that you will never endeavour to see me again; by so doing, you will render me a service.' You understand, Martial, I have promised; on the honour of a man, I will keep my word; but it is hard."

"Once at our destination, you will forget, by degrees, your sorrow. We will work, we will live retired and tranquil, like good farmers, except occasionally trying our skill, as marksmen, on the Arabs, ah ! there, La Louve will help us."

"If it should come to blows, I am at home there, Martial," said the Slasher, slightly animated. "I am unmarried, and I have been a trooper."

"And I a poacher !"

"But you—you have a wife, and these two children whom you have adopted. As for me, I have nothing but my hide, and since it can no longer serve as a screen for M. Rudolf, I have no regard for it. So, if we should be obliged to give them their change, its my affair."

"Ah ! we'll both have something to do with it."

"No; I alone—thunder ! leave the Bedouins to me."

"Good; I would rather hear you speak thus than as you did a short time since. Come, Slasher, we will be true brothers, and you can converse with me of your sorrow, if it endures, for I have my own. The recollection of this day will last all my life. One cannot see his mother, his sister, as I have seen mine, without for ever bearing it in remembrance. Our situations are so similar that it is good for us to be together. We will not fear to look danger in the face; well, we will be half farmers, half soldiers. If we can start any game, we will hunt. If you wish to live alone, you can do so, and we will be near neighbours; if otherwise, we will all live together. We will bring up the children like honest people, and you shall be, almost, their uncle, while we will be brothers. How does it suit you !" said Martial, offering his hand to the Slasher.

"It suits me well, my good Martial; and then, sorrow shall kill me, or I will kill it, as the saying is." "It will not kill you—we shall grow old in our wilderness, and every night we will say, brother, *thanks* to M. Rudolf; that shall be our prayer for him."

"Martial, you put balsam on my wound."

"Good; this foolish dream, you will think no more of it, I hope?" "I will endeavour; ah ! well, you will call for us at four o'clock? the diligence starts at five." "It is agreed upon. But here we are in Paris; I will stop the coach, and go on foot to the Barriere Clarenton; I will await M. Rudolf, to see him pass."

The carriage stopped, and the Slasher got out.

"Don't forget, at four o'clock, my good comrade," said Martial: "at four o'clock !"

The Slasher had forgotten that it was the morning after Mid-Lent. So he was much surprised at the spectacle, at the same time fantastic and hideous, which was presented to his view when he walked through a part of the exterior boulevard, which he crossed on his way to the Barriere Charenton.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE HAND OF HEAVEN.

THE Slasher in a few moments was carried along, in spite of himself, by a dense crowd, a popular torrent, which, descending from the taverns of the Faubourg de la Glaciere, collected around the approaches to the Barriere, to pour out afterward on the Boulevard Saint Jacques, where the execution was to take place.

Although it was broad daylight, yet still could be heard at a distance the resounding music of the orchestras of the drinking-dens, where, above all, could be distinguished the sonorous vibrations of the cornets-a-piston.

It needs the pencil of Callot, or Rembrandt, or of Goya, to portray the bizarre, hideous, almost fantastical appearance of this multitude. Almost all, men, women, children, were dressed in old masquerading costumes; those who had not been able to obtain this *luxury* had fastened on their clothes old rags, of flaunting colours; some young men were attired in women's apparel, torn and soiled with mud; all these faces, haggard from debauch and vice, bloated by intoxication, sparkled with savage joy, in thinking that, after a night of drunken orgies, they were going to see the two women put to death, for whom the scaffold was raised.

The scum of the population of Paris, an immense mob, was composed of bandits and abandoned woman, who demand each day from crime their daily bread, and who each night return well filled to their dens.

The exterior boulevard being very contracted at this place, the closely packed crowd entirely blocked up the passage-way. In spite of his athletic strength, the Slasher was obliged to remain almost immovable in the midst of this compact mass; he submitted. The prince, leaving the Rue Plumet at ten o'clock, as they had told him would not leave the Barriere Charenton until about eleven, and it was not yet seven.

Although formerly he had associated with the degraded classes to which this mob belonged, the Slasher, on again finding himself among them, felt invincible disgust. Crowded by the reflux of the mob, against the wall of one of the wine shops, which swarm on these boulevards, through the open window from whence escaped the deafening sound of a brass band, the Slasher saw, against his will, a strange spectacle.

In a long low room (one end of which was occupied by the musicians), surrounded by benches and tables covered with the remains of a repast, broken plates, and overturned bottles, a dozen men and women disguised, half drunk, were dancing *La Chahut*, a dance which was never performed except at the end of the *ball*, when the municipal guards had retired. Among the depraved couples who figured in this revel, the Slasher remarked two who won applause above all by the disgusting immodesty of their postures, gestures, and words.

The first couple were composed of a man nearly disguised as a bear, by means of a waistcoat and trousers of black sheepskin. The head of the animal, doubtless too heavy to carry, had been replaced by a kind of hood of long hair, which entirely covered the face; two holes near the eyes, and a large slit over the mouth, allowed him to see, speak, and breathe. This masked man, one of the prisoners who had escaped from La Force (among whom were also Barbillon and the two murderers arrested at the *tapis-franc*, at the commencement of this story)—was Nicholas Martial, the son and brother of the women for whom the scaffold was erected, close at hand. Dragged into this act of inhuman insensibility by one of his companions, a formidable ruffian, this wretch dared, with the aid of his disguise, to yield himself to the last joys of the carnival.

The woman with whom he danced was dressed as a sutler, with a leathern cap rather the worse for wear, the ribands torn, a kind of jacket of faded red cloth, ornamented with three rows of brass buttons, hussar fashion; a green petticoat and pantaloons of white calico; her black hair fell in disorder on her face; her ghastly and livid features expressed impudence and effrontery.

The *vis-a-vis* of these dancers were not less vile.

The man of very tall stature, disguised as Robert Macaire, had daubed his bony face with soot in such a manner that he was not recognisable; besides, a large band covered his left eye, and the dead white of the right one, standing out in relief with the black face, made it still more hideous. The lower part of the visage of Skeleton (doubtless he has been recognised) disappeared entirely in a high cravat made of an old red shawl. He wore, according to the tradition, a gray hat, rasped, flattened, dirty, and without a crown; a green coat in tatters; madder-coloured pantaloons, patched in a thousand places, and tied around the ankles with twine; this assassin, overdoing the most grotesque and most impudent positions of the *Chahut*, now to the right, now to the left, backward and forward, with his long limbs hard as iron, folded and unfolded them with so much vigour and elasticity, that one would have said they were hung on springs.

Worthy corypheus of this Saturnalian, his partner, a tall, brazen creature dressed as a *debardeur*, wearing a cap stuck on a powdered wig with a long tail, had on a vest and trousers of green velvet, fastened around her waist by an orange scarf, whose long ends floated behind.

A fat, masculine-looking woman, the Ogress of the *tapis-franc*, seated on one of the benches, held on her lap the plaid cloaks of this creature and the sutler, while they danced with their worthy companions.

Among the other dancers was remarked a little cripple dressed as a devil with the aid of

a black knit guernsey, much too large for him, red drawers, and a horrible grinning green mask. Notwithstanding his infirmity, this little monster was of surprising agility; his precocious depravity reached, if it did not surpass, that of his frightful companions, and he gambolled away with equal effrontery, opposite his partner, a fat woman disguised as a shepherdess, who excited still more the impudence of her partner by her shouts of laughter.

No charge being brought against Tortillard, and Bras-Rouge having been provisionally left in prison, the child, on the demand of his father, had been reclaimed by Micou the receiver.

As secondary figures of the picture which we have endeavoured to paint, let the reader imagine all that is lowest, most shameless, and most monstrous in this idle, reckless, rapacious, sanguinary debauch, which shows itself more and more hostile to social order, and to which we have wished to call the attention of reflecting persons on terminating this recital.

May this last horrible scene symbolize the imminent peril which continually menaces society!

Yes, let one reflect that the cohesion, the dreaded increase of this race of robbers and murderers is a kind of living protest against the defects of restraining laws, and, above all, against the absence of preventive measures, of provident legislation, of preservative institutions, destined to overlook and guard from infancy this crowd of unfortunates, abandoned or perverted by frightful examples. Once more, these disinherited beings, made neither better nor worse than other creatures, do not become thus incurably corrupted but in the filth of misery, ignorance, and brutality, where they crawl into existence.

Still more excited by the laughter, by the bravos of the crowd collected at the windows, the actors of the abominable orgies which we now relate shouted to the orchstra to play a last *galop*.

The musicians, delighted at the prospect of a termination to their labours, yielded to the general wish, and played with energy a lively tune.

At the vibrating sounds of the brazen instruments, the excitement increased, the dancers appeared to be seized with a sort of phrensy, and, following Skeleton, and his partner, commenced, a *ronde infernale*, uttering savage shouts.

A thick dust, raised by these furious shufflings, arose from the floor, and cast a kind of red cloud around this whirlwind of men and women, who turned with giddy rapidity.

Soon, for these heads excited by wine, by the rapid motion, by their own cries, it was no longer inebriety — it was delirium; it was phrensy; room was wanting. Skeleton cried with a breathless voice,

"Clear the door! We are going out — up on the boulevard."

"Yes, yes!" cried the dense crowd at the windows, "a *galop* to the Barriere Saint Jacques!"

"It will soon be time for them to shorten the two motts!"

"The executioner throws double-ace; it is *love*!"

"Accompanied by the French horn!"

"We will dance the cotillon by the guillotine!"

"Go ahead of the woman without any head!" cried Tortillard.

"It will enliven the condemned."

"I invite the widow."

"I invite the daughter."

"That will make Jack Ketch gay."

"He will dance La Chahut in his shop with his customers."

"Death to the nobs. Long live the leary coves and nailers!" cried Skeleton, in a roar.

These jests, and cannibal threats, accompanied by vulgar songs, cries, whistlings, shouts, were augmented still more when the band had made, by its impetuous violence, a large opening through the middle of this compact crowd.

Then it was a frightful pellmell; then were heard howlings, imprecations, and bursts of mad laughter, which no longer appeared human.

The tumult was suddenly carried to its height by two new incidents.

The vehicle containing the condemned, accompanied by its escort of cavalry, appeared in the distance at the corner of the boulevard; then all the mob rushed in this direction, uttering a howl of ferocious satisfaction.

At this moment, also, the crowd was met by a courier coming from the Boulevard des Invalides, and galloping towards the Barriere de Charenton. He was dressed in a light blue jacket, with a yellow collar, laced with silver on all the seams; but as a sign of deep mourning, he wore black breeches, with heavy boots; his cap, also, bordered with silver, was surrounded with a crape. In fine, on the horse's blinkers were, in relief, the sovereign arms of Gerolstein.

The courier walked his horse; but his progress becoming more and more embarrassed, was almost obliged to stop when he found himself in the midst of the crowd of which we have spoken. Although he cried "Take care!" and guided his horse with the greatest precaution, cries, threats, abuses, soon arose against him.

"Does he want to get on our backs with his camel, this fellow?"

"A silver door-plate on his body!" cried Tortillard, under his green mask with its red tongue.

"If he gives us any cheek, we'll put him on his feet."

"And we'll cut off the jingles of his jacket to melt them," said Nicholas.

"And we'll rip you open if you are not satisfied, dirty footman," added Skeleton, addressing the courier, and seizing the bridle of his horse, for the crowd had become so dense that

the bandit had relinquished his project of dancing to the barrier.

The courier, a vigorous and resolute man, said to Skeleton, raising the handle of his whip, "If you do not let go the bridle of my horse, I will cut you across the face."

"You, you pitiful scoundrel?"

"Yes; I am walking my horse; I cry 'Take care!' you have no right to stop me. The carriage of my lord follows me. I already hear the cracking of the whips. Let me pass."

"Your lord?" said Skeleton. "What is your lord to me? I will knock him down if it pleases me. I never have stabbed a lord: this gives me a desire to do it."

"There are no more lords—Hooraw for the Revolution!" cried Tortillard, and humming the lines of the *Parisienne*:

"Onward! on! upon their cannon!"

he caught hold of one of the courier's boots, and bearing with all his weight, made him shake in his seat. A blow with the butt of his whip on the head of Tortillard paid him for his audacity. But immediately the enraged mob threw themselves upon the courier; he dashed the spurs into the sides of his horse, and endeavoured to disengage himself, but could not succeed; neither was he able to draw his hunting-knife. Dismounted, thrown backward, amid their cries and enraged shouts, he would have been killed had it not been for the arrival of Rudolf's carriage, which diverted the attention of these wretches.

For some time the prince's coupe, drawn by four post-horses, went only on a walk, and one of the two footmen, in mourning (on account of the Countess M'Gregor's death) seated behind, had prudently descended, and stood near one of the doors, the carriage being a very low one. The postillions cried, "Look out!" and advanced with caution.

Rudolf as well as his daughter, was dressed in deep mourning; holding one of her hands, he looked at her with unspeakable happiness; the sweet, charming face of Fleur de Marie appeared to advantage in her little black crape bonnet, which set off her fair complexion and the brilliant tints of her beautiful flaxen hair; one would have said that the azure of this fine day was reflected in her large eyes, which never had been of a softer and more transparent blue. Although her sweetly-smiling face expressed calmness and happiness, yet, when she looked at her father, a shade of melancholy, sometimes even of indefinable sadness, cast its shadow on the features of Fleur de Marie, when the eyes of her father were turned away.

"You are displeased at my calling you so early this morning, and for having advanced the moment of departure?" said Rudolf, smiling.

"Oh! no, father dear—the morning is so beautiful!"

"That was my thought; and our day's journey will be better divided by leaving early, and you will be less fatigued. Murphy, my aides-de-camp, and the carriage with your women, will join us at our first stopping-place, where you will repose."

"Dear father, it is I only of whom you are always thinking."

"Yes, darling, it is impossible for me to have any other thought," said the prince, smiling; then he added with a burst of tenderness, "Oh! I love you so much—I love you so much—your forehead—quick."

Fleur de Marie leaned towards her father, and Rudolf kissed her beautiful forehead.

It was at this moment that the carriage, approaching the crowd, had lessened its speed.

Rudolf, much astonished, let down the window, and said in German to the footman who stood near the door, "Well! Frantz, what is the matter? what is this tumult?"

"There is such a crowd that the horses cannot move, your highness."

"And what is the reason of the crowd?"

"I have just heard that there is an execution about to take place, your highness."

"Oh! this is frightful!" cried Rudolf, throwing himself back in the carriage.

"What is the matter, father?" said Fleur de Marie, with anxiety.

"Nothing—nothing, my child."

"But these threatening cries—do you hear? they approach. What is that?"

"Frantz, order the postillions to turn and go to Charenton by another road, whatever it may be," said Rudolf.

"It is too late, your highness!" we are in the crowd. They have stopped the horses. Some ill-looking people—" The footman could not say another word. The crowd exasperated by the sanguinary shouts of Skeleton and Nicholas, suddenly surrounded the carriage. In spite of the efforts and threats of the postillions, the horses were stopped, and Rudolf saw himself surrounded on all sides by horrible, threatening, and furious faces; pre-eminent among all, from his great height, was Skeleton, who advanced to the carriage door.

"Father, take care!" cried Fleur de Marie, throwing her arms around Rudolf's neck.

"Is it you, then, who are the lord?" said Skeleton, thrusting his hideous head into the carriage.

At this insolence, Rudolf would have given way to the natural violence of his character, had it not been for the presence of his daughter; but he restrained himself, and answered coolly, "What do you want? Why do you stop my carriage?"

"Because it pleases us," said Skeleton, placing his bony hands on the door. "Every one in his turn: yesterday you trampled on the poor man; to-day the poor man will trample on you, if you stir."

"Father, we are lost!" murmured Fleur de Marie, in a low voice.

"Compose yourself—I comprehend," said the prince; "it is the last day of the Carnival. These people are drunk. I will soon get rid of them."

"We must make him get out, and his mott

also,' cried Nicholas. "Why should they trample on poor folks?"

"You appear to be drunk, and doubtless have a desire to drink more," said Rudolf, taking a purse from his pocket. "Here, this is for you; do not detain my carriage any longer." And he threw out his purse. Tortillard caught it.

"Exactly; you are going a journey; your pockets must be well lined, so hand out some more money, or I will kill you. I have nothing to risk. I ask you for your money or your life in broad daylight. It is a rare old game?" said Skeleton, completely intoxicated with wine and rage; and he roughly opened the door.

The patience of Rudolf was exhausted; uneasy for Fleur de Marie, whose alarm increased at each moment, and thinking that a decided stand would overawe this wretch, whom he thought intoxicated, he sprang from his carriage to seize Skeleton by the throat. At first the latter drew back quickly, taking from his pocket a long knife; then he threw himself upon Rudolf.

Fleur de Marie, seeing the poniard of the villain raised against her father, uttered a piercing scream, sprang out of the carriage, and clasped her arms around him.

Without the aid of the Slasher, they would have perished. He, at the commencement of the affray, having recognised the livery of the prince, had succeeded, after superhuman efforts, in approaching the Skeleton. At the moment that he threatened the prince with his knife, the Slasher with one hand grasped the arm of the villain, and with the other seized him by the throat, and gave him the trip backward.

Although taken by surprise, Skeleton, turned, recognised the Slasher, and cried, "Blue Cap of La Force! this time I kill you;" and throwing himself furiously on the Slasher, he plunged the knife into his breast.

The Slasher staggered, but did not fall: the crowd supported him.

"The guard! here is the guard!" cried several voices.

At these words, at sight of the assassination of the Slasher, the dense crowd, fearing to be compromised in the murder, dispersed as by enchantment, and fled in all directions.

When the guard arrived, guided by the courier, who had succeeded in making his escape when the mob had abandoned him to surround the carriage, there only remained on the mournful scene, Rudolf, his daughter, and the Slasher covered with blood. The two footmen had seated him on the ground, with his back against a tree.

All this had passed a thousand times more rapidly than it is possible to write it, at some steps from the wine-shop, whence had issued Skeleton and his band.

The prince, pale and agitated, supported the fainting Fleur de Marie in his arms, while the postillions readjusted the traces, which had been injured.

"Quick!" said the prince to his people, who were occupied in assisting the Slasher. "Carry this unfortunate man into this tavern. And you," added he, addressing his courier, "get on the box, and drive with all speed to the hotel for Dr. David. He was not to leave before eleven o'clock: you will find him there."

Some minutes afterwards, the carriage was rapidly driven off, and the two domestics carried the Slasher into the saloon where the orgies had taken place, and where still remained some of the women who had figured in it.

"My poor child," said Rudolf to his daughter, "I will lead you to a chamber in this house, and you will await me there: for I cannot abandon solely to the care of my people this courageous man, who has once more saved my life."

"Oh! father, I entreat you do not leave me!" cried Fleur de Marie with alarm, clinging to the arm of Rudolf. "Do not leave me alone. I would die with fear. I will go where you go—"

"But this is a frightful sight!"

"But, thanks to this man, you live for me, father; at least, permit me to unite with you in thanking and consoling him."

The perplexity of the prince was great: his daughter seemed so much alarmed at remaining alone, that he was obliged to allow her to accompany him to the room where the Slasher had been carried. The master of the tavern, assisted by several of the women who had remained (among whom was the Ogress of the White Rabbit), had in haste laid the wounded man upon a mattress, and then staunched his wound with napkins. The Slasher had just opened his eyes, when Rudolf entered. At the sight of the prince his countenance, of deathlike paleness, brightened up a little; he smiled painfully, and said to him, in a feeble voice,

"Ah, M. Rudolf! how fortunate it was that I was at hand."

"Brave and devoted—as always," said the prince to him in a mournful voice: "you save me again!"

"I was going to the Barriere de Charenton—to see you depart—happily—I was stopped here by the crowd—besides, this was to happen to me—I said so to Martial—I had a presentiment."

"A presentiment."

"Yes, M. Rudolf—the dream of the sergeant—last night I had it—"

"Forget these ideas. Hope: your wound will not be mortal."

"Oh! yes—Bones has struck home. Never mind, I was right—to say to Martial—that an earthworm like me could sometimes be—useful—to a great lord like you—"

"But it is life—life!—that I owe you again."

"We are quits, M. Rudolf. You told me that I had a heart and honour. These words—Oh! I suffocate, without you—command—do me the honour—of—your hand!—I feel that I am going—"

"No, it is impossible!" cried the prince, bending over the Slasher, and pressing in

his hands the icy fingers of the dying man. "No; you will live—you will live!"

"M. Rudolf—do you see that there is something—up there!—I killed—with a *slash* myself!" said the Slasher, in a voice more and more feeble and indistinct.

At this moment his eyes were fixed on Fleur de Marie, whom he had not yet perceived. Astonishment was painted on his dying face; he started, and said,

"Oh! La Goualeuse."

"Yes, she is my daughter. She blesses you for having preserved her father."

"She—your daughter! here—that reminds me of our acquaintance—M. Rudolf—and the—blows with the fists—at the end—but—this—blow with the knife—will be also—the blow—of the end. I have *slashed*—I am *slashed*—it is fair play!"

Then he uttered a deep sigh, his head falling backward—he was dead!

The noise of horses resounded without; the carriage of Rudolf had met that of Murphy and David, who, in their eagerness to rejoin the prince, had hastened their departure. David and the squire entered.

"David," said Rudolf, wiping away his tears, and pointing to the Slasher. "is there no hope?"

"None, your highness," said the doctor, after a minute's examination. During this minute, a mute but frightful scene passed between Fleur de Marie and the Ogress, which Rudolf had not noticed. When the Slasher pronounced in a low tone the name of La Goualeuse, the Ogress, raising her head, had quickly seen Fleur de Marie. Already the horrible woman had recognised Rudolf in the person whom they called his highness. He called La Goualeuse his daughter. Such a transformation stupified the Ogress, who kept her staring eyes obstinately fixed on her former victim.

Fleur de Marie, pale and alarmed, seemed fascinated by this look. The death of the Slasher, the unexpected appearance of the Ogress, who had just awakened more grievously than ever the remembrance of her former degradation, seemed to her of mournful presage. From this moment, Fleur de Marie was struck with one of those presentiments which often have, on characters like hers, an irresistible influence.

* * * * *

A short time after these sad events, Rudolf and his daughter had left Paris for ever.

EPILOGUE.

GEROLSTEIN.

CHAPTER I.

PRINCE HENRY D'HERKAUSEN—OLDENSAAL TO COUNT MAXIMILIAN KAMINETZ.

Oldenzaal, August 23, 1841.

I HAVE just returned from Gerolstein, where I passed three months with the grand-duke and his family. I expected to have found a letter announcing your arrival at Oldenzaal, my dear Maximilian. Imagine my grief and surprise, when I understood that you would be detained in Hungary several weeks longer.

I have not been able to write to you for four months, not knowing how to direct my letters to you, thanks to your original and adventurous manner of travelling, and yet you had, nevertheless, seriously promised me at Vienna, at the moment of our separation, that you would be at Oldenzaal the first of August. I must, then, renounce the pleasure of seeing you; and never had I more desire to pour out my heart into yours, my good Maximilian, my oldest friend; for though we are both still young, our friendship is old—it dates from our infancy.

What shall I say to you? Within three months a great revolution has taken place in me. I have reached one of those moments which decide a man's fate. Judge if I do not want your presence, your advice. But you will not fail me much longer; whatever concerns detain you in Hungary, you will come, Maximilian; you must come, I conjure you, for I shall, indeed, need the most earnest consolation, and I cannot go to you. My father, whose health becomes more and more feeble, has recalled me from Gerolstein. He grows weaker every day. It is impossible for me to leave him.

I have so much to tell you, that I shall be prolix, for I have to recount to you the most painful, the most romantic incident of my life.

Strange and sad chance! during this period we are fatally distant from each other; we, inseparables, we, brothers, both of us the most fervent apostles of thrice holy friendship, we, who were so proud of proving that the Cazlas and Posa of our Schiller are not idealties, and that, like those divine creations of the great poet, we know how to taste the sweet delights of a tender and mutual attachment!

Oh, my friend, why were you not there, why were you not there? For three months my heart has been overflowing with emotions, at the same time inexpressibly sweet and sad. And I was alone; I am alone now. Pity me; you, who know my sensibility, at times so fanciifully expansive; you, who have often seen my eyes moistened with tears at the simple recital of a generous action, at the simple view of a beautiful sunset, or in a quiet and starry summer night. You remember the past year, during our excursion to the Ruins of Oppenfeld—the borders of the great lake—our silent reveries during that magnificent evening, so calm, so poetical, so serene.

Strange contrast! it was three days before that bloody duel, in which I would not take you for my second, for I should have suffered too much for you if I had been wounded under your eyes—that duel, for a quarrel at play, in which my second unfortunately killed that young Frenchman, the Viscount St. Remy. Apropos, do you know what has become of that dangerous siren St. Remy brought to Oppenfeld, and whose name was, I think, Cecily David?

You will smile with pity, my friend, to see me wander thus among these vague remembrances of the past, instead of proceeding to the grave confessions which I have announced to you; it is because, in spite of myself, I recoil from these confessions; I know your severity; I am afraid of being scolded, yes, scolded, because, instead of having acted with reflection, with wisdom (alas for the wisdom of one-and-twenty!), I have acted foolishly, or, rather, I have not acted at all; I have suffered myself to be borne along blindly on the current which carried me forward. It is only since my return from Gerolstein that I have, so to speak, awakened from the enchanting vision in which I have been cradled for the last three months, and this waking is sad.

Come then, my friend, good Maximilian, I assume my best courage. Hear me with indulgence. I begin by casting down my eyes; I dare not look at you, for as you read these lines your features will become so grave, so severe. Stoical man!

Having obtained leave of absence for six months, I left Vienna, and remained here some time with my father; his health was then good, and he advised me to go and visit my excellent aunt, Princess Julianna, the superior of the Abbey of Gerolstein. I have told you, I believe, my friend, that my grandmother was cousin-german of the grandfather of the present grand-duke; and that the latter, Gustavus Rudolf, on account of this relationship, has always treated my father and myself very kindly, very affectionately, as cousins. You know, also, I believe, that during a very long journey which the prince recently made into France, he gave to my father the charge of the government of the grand duchy.

You will believe that it is not from any pride, my friend, that I mention these circumstances to you; it is only by way of explanation of the causes of the extreme intimacy in which I lived with the grand duke and his family during my stay at Gerolstein.

You recollect that last year, during our journey on the banks of the Rhine, we were informed that the prince had found in France, and had married *in extremis*, the Countess M'Gregor, in order to legitimatize the birth of a daughter whom he had by her, in consequence of an early secret marriage, which was afterward broken, from some illegality in the ceremony, and because it had been contracted against the will of the reigning grand duke.

This young daughter, so solemnly acknowledged, is that charming Princess Amelia,* of whom Lord Dudley, who saw her at Gerolstein, about a year since, spoke to us so often at Vienna, last winter. You recollect, we accused him of exaggeration. Strange chance! If any one had then told me—

But though you have undoubtedly now almost divined my secret, let me follow the march of events without interruption.

The Convent of Saint Hermangilda, of which my aunt is the abbess, is hardly a quarter of a league distant from Gerolstein, for the abbey gardens border on the suburbs of the city. A charming house, completely isolated from the cloister, had been placed at my disposition by my aunt, who loves me, as you know, with a maternal tenderness.

The day of my arrival she informed me that there was the next day to be a solemn reception and court ceremony; the grand duke on that day was to make the official announcement of his approaching marriage with the Marchionness d'Harville, who had recently arrived at Gerolstein, accompanied by her father, Count Orbigny.†

Some blame the prince for not having sought a sovereign alliance in his marriage (the grand duchess, the former wife of the prince, belonged to the house of Bavaria): others, on the contrary, and my aunt is of the number of these, congratulate him for having preferred an amiable young lady, whom he adores, and who belongs to the highest nobility of France, to considerations of ambition. You know, moreover, my friend, that my aunt having always entertained for the Grand Duke Rudolf the most profound attachment, she can appreciate, better than any one else, the eminent qualities of the prince.

"My dear child," said she to me on occasion of this solemn reception, which I was to attend the day after my arrival, "my dear child, the most remarkable part of this fete will undoubtedly be *the Pearl of Gerolstein*."

"What do you mean, my dear aunt?"

"The Princess Amelia."

"The daughter of the grand-duke? Lord Dudley told us about her at Vienna. He spoke of her with an enthusiasm which we called poetical exaggeration."

"At my age, with my character, and in my position," replied my aunt, "one is not easily excited; and you will believe my judgment to be impartial, my dear child. Indeed, I assure you, that in my whole life I never knew anything so enchanting as the Princess Amelia. I might speak to you of her angelic beauty, if she were not endowed with an inexpressible charm which is superior even to her beauty. Figure to yourself candour with dignity, and grace in modesty. From the first day in which the grand duke presented me to her, I felt for this young princess an involuntary sympathy. Nor am I alone in this opinion. The Archduchess Sophia has been at Gerolstein some days; she is the proudest and most haughty princess whom I know."

"Very true, my aunt, her irony is terrible; few persons escape her biting pleasantries. At Vienna, she was dreaded like the fire. Can the Princess Amelia have found favour with her."

"The other day she came here after having visited the House of Refuge which is placed under the superintendence of the young princess. 'Do you know one thing,' said this dreaded archduchess to me, with her abrupt frankness; 'I have a mind singularly disposed to satire, have I not? Well, if I were to live long with the daughter of the grand duke, I should become, I am sure, inoffensive; her goodness is so penetrating, so contagious.'"

"But is my cousin, then, an enchantress?" said I to my aunt, smiling.

"Her most powerful attraction in my eyes, at least," replied my aunt, "is that mingling of gentleness, modesty, and dignity, of which I have spoken to you, and which gives the most touching expression to her angelic face."

"Modesty is certainly a rare quality in a princess, so young, so beautiful, so happy."

"Remember, too, my dear child, how much better it is for the Princess Amelia to enjoy without vain ostentation, the high position which is incontestably acquired for her: her elevation is recent."

"In her conversations with you, dear aunt, has the princess ever made any allusions to her past fortunes?"

"No: but when, notwithstanding my advanced age, I have spoken to her with the respect which is due to her, since her royal highness is the daughter of our sovereign, her ingenuous distress, mingled with gratitude and veneration for me, have deeply moved me; for her reserve, at the same time noble and affable,

* As the name of Marie recalled to Rudolf and his daughter such sad recollections, he had given her the name of Amelia, after his mother.

† The reader is reminded, in order to maintain the probability of this narrative, that the last Princess of Courtland, a lady as remarkable for the singular superiority of her mind as for the charm of her character, and the admirable goodness of her heart, was Mademoiselle de Medeur

* On arriving in Germany, Rudolf had given out that Fleur de Marie, whom he had long supposed dead, had never quitted her mother, the Countess M'Gregor.

proved to be that the present did not intoxicate her so much as to make her forget the past, and that she rendered to my age what I granted to her rank."

"You must have an exquisite tact, my dear aunt, to observe such delicate shades."

"Thus, my dear child, the more I have seen of the Princess Amelia, the more I have felt my first impression confirmed. Since she has been here, the good works she has accomplished are incredible, and she has done it all with a reflection, a maturity of judgment which amazes me in a person of her age. Judge of them: at her request, the grand-duke has founded at Gerolstein an establishment for little orphan girls of five or six years old, and for young girls, also orphans or abandoned by their parents, who have reached the age of sixteen, an age so fatal for the unfortunate who have no one to defend them from the seductions of vice or the pressure of want. The noble nuns of my abbey teach and direct the daughters of this house. In going to visit it, I have often occasion to observe the adoration which these poor disinherited creatures entertain towards the Princess Amelia. Every day she goes to pass several hours in this establishment, which is placed under her especial protection: and I repeat to you, my child, it is not only respect, gratitude, that these poor girls and the nuns feel for her highness, it is almost fanaticism."

"The Princess Amelia must be an angel," replied I to my aunt.

"An angel — yes, an angel," replied she, "for you cannot imagine with what melting goodness she treats her favourites, and with what pious solicitude she watches over them — I have never seen the susceptibility of misfortune more delicately treated, it seems as if an irresistible sympathy especially attracts the princess towards this class of the abandoned poor. Finally, would you believe it, she, the daughter of a sovereign, never calls these young girls anything but *sisters*."

At these last words of my aunt, I confess to you, Maximilian, the tears came into my eyes. Do you not find something beautiful and holy in this conduct of the princess? You know my sincerity, I protest to you that I report to you as I will always report to you, the conversation of my aunt, almost word for word.

"Since the princess," said I to her, "is so marvellously endowed, I shall feel great embarrassment when I am presented to her to-morrow; you know my insurmountable timidity, you know that elevation of character overpowers me more even than that of rank, I am sure I shall appear to the princess as stupid as embarrassed; I know this well enough beforehand."

"Come, come," said my aunt smiling, "she will take pity on you, my dear child, and the more so as you will not be a new acquaintance to her."

"Dear aunt."

"Certainly."

"How so?"

"You recollect that when at the age of sixteen years, you quitted Oldenzaal to make a journey to Russia and England with your father, I had your portrait painted in the costume which you wore at the first fancy ball given by the late grand-duchess?"

"Yes, the costume of a Germain page of the sixteenth century."

"Our excellent painter Fritz Mokker, while he faithfully re-produced your features, not only retraced a personage of the sixteenth century, but with the caprice of an artist, he amused himself with imitating even the manner and the appearance of age of pictures painted soon after that period. A few days after her arrival in Germany, the Princess Amelia having come to visit me with her father, remarked your portrait, and asked me with great simplicity what this charming picture of the olden time was? Her father smiled, and making a signal to me, answered her, 'This portrait is that of one of our cousins, you see by his costume, my dear Amelia, of some three hundred years date. When he was very young he exhibited a rare courage and an excellent heart. Does he not, in fact, display bravery in his bearing, and goodness in his smile?'"

(I beg you, Maximilian, do not shrug your shoulder with impatient disdain, at my writing such things about myself. It is hard for me to do it, you may suppose, but the sequel of this narrative will prove to you that these puerile details, of which I feel the bitter ridicule, are unfortunately indispensable. I close the parenthesis, and go on:)

"The Princess Amelia," continued my aunt, "the dupe of this innocent pleasantry, agreed in opinion with her father, respecting the gentle and proud expression of your physiognomy, after having attentively examined the portrait. Afterwards when I went to see her at Gerolstein, she smilingly asked me the news of her cousin of the olden time. I then owned to her our deception, telling her that the fair page of the sixteenth century, was simply my nephew, Prince Henry d'Herkausen-Oldenzaal, now twenty-one years of age, Captain of his Majesty the Emperor of Austria's guards, and in everything excepting the costume, very like his portrait. At these words, the Princess Amelia," added my aunt, "blushed and became again serious, as she almost always is. Since then, she has not spoken to me again about the picture. Nevertheless, you see, my dear child, that you will not be entirely a stranger and a new face to *your cousin*, as the grand-duke calls you. So take courage and sustain the honour of your portrait," added my aunt smiling.

This conversation took place, as I have told you, my dear Maximilian, on the eve of the day when I was to be presented to the princess, my cousin. I then left my aunt, and returned to my apartment.

I have never hidden from you my most secret thoughts, good or evil, I am therefore about to confess to you what absurd and fool-

ish imaginations I allowed myself to indulge in after the conversation which I have just reported to you.

CHAPTER II.

PRINCE HENRY D'HERKAUSEN-OLDENZAAL TO COUNT MAXIMILIAN KAMINETZ.

YOU have often told me, my dear Maximilian, that I have no vanity; I believe that is true, and must believe so, to be able to continue this account without exposing myself to the charge of presumptuousness in your eyes.

When I was alone at home, in recalling my aunt's conversation, I could not help dreaming over with a secret satisfaction the fact that the Princess Amelia having observed the portrait of me, made six or seven years ago, had asked a few days after in jest, for news of her cousin of the olden time. I acknowledged that nothing was more foolish than to found the least hope upon such an insignificant circumstance; but, as I told you, I shall always use the most entire frankness with you; this insignificant circumstance ravished me. Undoubtedly the praises which I had heard lavished upon the Princess Amelia by a woman as grave and austere as my aunt, while they raised the princess still higher in my eyes, rendered me yet more sensible to the distinction which she had deigned to bestow upon me, or, rather, had granted to my portrait. However, as I tell you, this distinction awakened in me such foolish hopes, that, now, in throwing back a calmer glance upon the past, I ask how I could have allowed myself to be drawn on to those thoughts which inevitably bordered upon a precipice.

Although a relation of the grand-duke, and always kindly welcomed by him, it was impossible for me to conceive of the least hope of marriage with the princess, even if she had accepted my love, which was still more improbable. Our family holds an honourable rank, but it is poor, if we compare our fortune with the immense domains of the grand-duke, the richest prince of the Germanic Confederation; and then, I was hardly twenty-one years old; I was a mere captain in the Guards, without renown, without personal reputation; never, in short, would the grand-duke dream of me for his daughter.

All these reflections should have preserved me from a passion which as yet I did not feel, but of which I had, so to speak, a singular presentiment. Alas! I gave myself up, on the contrary, to new childishness. I was wearing on my finger a ring which was formerly given me by Theckla (the good countess, whom you know); although this token of careless and frivolous love could not trouble me much, I heroically made of it a sacrifice to my newborn love, and the poor ring disappeared in the water which flows rapidly under my window.

It is useless to tell you what a night I passed; you can imagine it. I knew that the Princess Amelia was fair, and of angelic beauty; I endeavoured to imagine her features, her stature, her demeanour, the sound of her voice, the expression of her countenance; then, remembering my portrait which she had remarked upon, I recollected with regret that the cursed artist had flattered me; besides in despair, I compared the picturesque costume of a page of the fifteenth century with the severe uniform of His Imperial Majesty's captain of the Guards. Then to these foolish ideas succeeded now and then, I assure you my friend, some generous thoughts, some noble impulses of the soul: I felt myself moved—yes! deeply moved at the remembrances of what my aunt had told me of that adorable goodness of the Princess Amelia, who called the poor abandoned ones whom she protected—*her sisters*.

In fine—odd and inexplicable contrast—I have, you know, the most humble opinion of myself—and I was, nevertheless, proud enough to suppose that the sight of my portrait had struck the princess; I had good sense enough to understand that an impassable distance separated me from her for ever, and yet I asked myself, with real anxiety, whether she would not find me unworthy of my portrait. In short, I had never seen her; I was convinced beforehand that she would hardly look upon me; and, nevertheless, I thought myself right in sacrificing to her the pledge of my former love.

I passed in real suffering the night of which I speak, and a part of the next day. The hour of reception arrived. I tried on two or three uniforms, finding each worse than the other, and set out for the palace of the grand-duke, much displeased with myself.

Although Gerolstein is hardly a quarter of a league from St. Hermangilda's Abbey, during the short drive a thousand thoughts assailed me: all the nonsense with which I had busied myself disappeared before a grave, sad, almost threatening idea; an invincible presentiment forewarned me of one of those crises which govern the whole life; a sort of revelation told me that I was about to love, to love passionately, to love as one loves but once: and, to heighten the fatality, this love, so highly and worthily placed, was always to be unfortunate to me.

These ideas alarmed me so much, that I suddenly took the wise resolution of stopping my carriage, returning to the abbey, and going to rejoin my father, leaving to my aunt the duty of excusing me to the grand-duke for my abrupt departure.

Unfortunately, one of those vulgar causes, of which the effects are sometimes so immense, prevented me from executing this. My carriage having stopped at the entrance of the avenue leading to the palace, I leaned out at the window to give orders to my people to return, when the Baron and Baroness Koller, who, like me, were on their way to court, perceived me, and ordered their carriage also to stop. The baron, seeing me in uniform, said, "Can I as-

sist you in anything, my dear prince? what has happened to you? Since you are on your way to the palace, will you not join us, if anything has happened to your horses?"

Nothing could have been more easy, you may say, my friend, than for me to have made some excuse for leaving the baron, and to have regained the abbey. I suppose it would have been; whether it was weakness, or a secret desire to escape from the salutary resolution I had just formed, I replied, with an embarrassed air, that I was giving orders to my coachman to inquire at the gate of the palace whether we entered by the new pavillion, or through the marble court. "The entrance is through the marble court, my dear prince," replied the baron; "it is a grand gala reception. Tell your coachman to follow mine, I will show you the way."

You know, Maximilian, how much of a fatalist I am; I would have returned to the abbey, to spare myself the vexations which I foresaw; fate opposed it; I abandoned myself to my star. You do not know the grand ducal palace of Gerolstein, my friend. According to all those who have visited the capitals of Europe, there is not, with the exception of Versailles, a royal residence, of which the whole pile of building, and the avenues to it, have a more majestic aspect. If I enter into some details on this subject, it is that, in recalling at this hour these imposing splendours, I ask myself why they did not all at first call up my nothingness; for the Princess Amelia was the daughter of the sovereign of this palace, of these guards, of this great wealth.

The court of marble, a vast hemicycle, is so called, because, with the exception of a broad path around it, in which the carriages pass, it is paved with marble of every colour, having magnificent mosaics. In the centre of it is placed an immense basin of antique marble, fed by abundant springs of water, which falls continually into a large porphyry vase.

This court of honour is surrounded by a row of white marble statues, of the finest execution, bearing torches of gilded bronze, from whence floods of dazzling gas are poured out. Alternating with these statues, Medicean vases, raised on their richly-sculptured pedestals, contain enormous rose-laurels, real flourishing shrubs, whose lustrous foliage, seen in the resplendant light, shines with a metallic verdure.

The carriages stopped at the foot of a double row of balustrades, which led to the peristyle of the palace; at the foot of this staircase, two cavaliers of the guard of the grand-duke, mounted on black horses, stood as sentries. The soldiers of the guard were chosen from among the largest-sized non-commissioned officers of the army. You, my friend, who are so fond of military men, would have been struck with the severe and martial air of these two colossal figures, whose cuirasses and brazen casques of an antique form, without ornament or crest, shone in the light. These cavaliers wore blue coats with yellow collar, pantaloons of white buckskin, and stout boots, reaching above the knee. Finally, for you, my friend, who are fond of military details, I will add, that at the top of the steps, on each side of the door, two grenadiers of the regiment of infantry of the grand-ducal guard were on duty. They resembled, I was told, in appearance, with the single exception of the colour of the dress and its facings, Napoleon's old guard.

After having crossed the vestibule, where, with their halberts in their hands, stood the Swiss liveried servants of the prince, I ascended an imposing staircase of white marble, which led to a portico, ornamented with columns of jasper, surmounted by a cupola, painted and gilded. There were ranged two long files of foot-servants. I afterward entered into the guard-room, at the door of which were standing a chamberlain and an aid-de-camp on service, whose duty it was to lead up to his royal highness such persons as were entitled to be presented to him. My relationship, though distant, gave me a right to this honour. An aid-de-camp preceded me into a long gallery filled with men in court-dresses or uniforms, and ladies in full costume.

While I was slowly passing through this brilliant crowd, I heard words which heightened still more my emotion. On all sides people were admiring the angelic beauty of the Princess Amelia, the charming face of the Marchioness d'Harville, and the truly imperial air of the Archduchess Sophia, who had recently arrived from Munich, with the Archduke Stanislaus, and was soon to go to Warsaw. But while all rendered homage to the lofty dignity of the archduchess and to the distinguished grace of the Marchioness d'Harville, it was acknowledged that nothing was more ideal than the enchanting form of the Princess Amelia.

As I approached the spot where the grand-duke and his daughter were standing, I felt my heart beating violently. At the moment when I reached the door of this saloon (I forget to tell you that there was a ball and court concert), the illustrious Liszt had just seated himself at the piano, and the deepest silence succeeded to the slight murmur of conversation. While awaiting the end of the piece, which the artist played with his accustomed superiority, I remained standing at the door.

Then, my dear Maximilian, for the first time I saw the Princess Amelia. Allow me to paint to you this scene, for I feel an inexpressible pleasure in gathering up all these recollections.

Imagine, my friend, a vast saloon, furnished with royal splendour, dazzling with light, and hung with crimson draperies, about which ran a border of foliage embroidered in gold. In the first row, in large gilded chairs, were seated the Archduchess Sophia (to whom the prince was doing the honours of the palace), on her left the Marchioness d'Harville, and on her right the Princess Amelia. Standing behind them was the grand-duke, wearing the uniform of colonel of his guards. He seemed to have

renewed his youth by his happiness, and did not look more than thirty years old. The military dress set off finely the elegance of his height, and the beauty of his face. Near him stood the Archduke Stanislaus, in the uniform of a field-marshal. Then came the Princess Amelia's ladies of honour, the wives of the grand dignitaries of the court, and, finally, the latter themselves.

Need I tell you that the Princess Amelia, by her rank less than by her grace and beauty, reigned supreme in this dazzling assemblage? Do not condemn me, my friend, without reading this description. Though it fall a thousand times below the reality, you may comprehend my adoration; you will understand that as soon as I saw her, I loved her, and that the suddenness of this passion can be equalled only by its violence, and the intensity of its duration.

The princess Amelia, dressed in a simple robe of white watered silk, wore, like the Archduchess Sophia, the grand cordon of the Imperial Order of Saint Nepomucene, which had been recently sent her by the empress. A bandeau of pearls, surrounding her noble and open forehead, harmonized most exquisitely with the two large braids of magnificent ashy blond hair which bordered her cheeks, which were lightly tinged with red; her fair arms, still whiter than the waves of lace from which they escaped, were half hidden by her gloves, which did not come up to her dimpled elbow: nothing could be more graceful than her bearing, nothing prettier than her little foot, with its white satin shoe. At the moment when I saw her, her large eyes, of the purest azure, were thoughtful. I do not know whether at this moment she felt the influence of some serious idea, or whether she was deeply impressed by the grave harmony of the piece Liszt was playing, but her half smile seemed to me to have a sweet and inexpressible melancholy; her head was slightly bent over on her bosom, and she was playing mechanically with a great bouquet of white violets and roses which she held in her hand.

I could never express to you my feelings at that moment: all that my aunt had said to me of the ineffable goodness of the Princess Amelia came back to my mind. You may smile, my friend, but in spite of myself I felt my eyes moistening as I gazed on this thoughtful, almost sad young girl, so admirably beautiful, surrounded with honours, with such respect, and so idolized by such a father as the grand-duke.

Maximilian, I have often said it to you, I believe man incapable of tasting certain kinds of happiness, which are, so to speak, too complete, too immense for his circumscribed faculties; I think, too, that certain beings are too divinely endowed not to feel sometimes that they are alone here below, and that they feel at times vague regrets for their exquisite delicacy, which exposes them to so many deceptions, to so many chills which are unknown to less tender natures. It seemed to me that at that time the Princess Amelia felt the reaction of such a thought.

Suddenly, by some strange chance (there is a fatality about everything here), she mechanically turned her eyes towards the place where I was standing.

You know how scrupulously etiquette and the hierarchy of rank is observed with us. Thanks to my title and to the ties of relationship which attach me to the grand-duke, the persons in the midst of whom I had at first placed myself had receded gradually, so that I remained almost alone, and decidedly in the first row, in the embrasure of the gallery door.

It must undoubtedly have been this circumstance which caused the princess, as she started from her reverie, to perceive and take notice of me, for she made a slight movement of surprise, and blushed.

She had seen my portrait at the abbey, in my aunt's apartments, and she recognised me—nothing was more simple. The princess had scarcely looked at me for a second, but that look made me feel the most violent, the most profound emotion; I felt my cheeks on fire; I cast down my eyes, and remained some minutes without daring to raise them again towards the princess. When I ventured to lift them, she was talking in a low tone with the Archduchess Sophia, who appeared to listen with the most affectionate interest.

Liszt having put an interval of some moments between the two pieces he was to play, the grand-duke took advantage of that moment to express to him his admiration in the most gracious manner. The prince, as he turned to his place, perceived me, made a sign of the head to me with the greatest kindness, and said some words to the archduchess in pointing me out to her. The latter, after having looked at me for a moment, turned towards the grand-duke, who could not help smiling as he replied to her and spoke to his daughter. The Princess Amelia seemed to be embarrassed, for she again blushed.

I was in torments: unfortunately, etiquette did not permit me to quit the spot where I was until the concert was over, which was again beginning. Two or three times I stole a glance at the Princess Amelia; she seemed pensive and thoughtful: my heart was oppressed; I suffered a slight feeling of uneasiness, as if I had been the cause of the pain she felt. Undoubtedly the grand-duke had been asking her, jestingly, if she found any resemblance to the portrait of her cousin of the olden times; and in her ingenuousness, she perhaps reproached herself for not having told her father that she had before recognised me.

When the concert was over, I followed the aid-de-camp. He led me towards the grand-duke, who advanced a few steps to meet me, took me cordially by the arm, and, approaching the Archduchess Sophia, said to her,

"I beg of your royal highness the permission to present to you my cousin, Prince Henry of Herkausen-Oldenzaal."

"I have already met the prince at Vienna, and I am happy to see him again here," replied

the archduchess, before whom I made a profound bow.

"My dear Amelia," continued the prince, addressing himself to his daughter, "I present to you Prince Henry, your cousin; he is son of Prince Paul, one of my most venerable friends, whom I much regret not to see to-day at Gerolstein."

"Be so kind, sir, as to inform Prince Paul that I share deeply in my fathers regrets, for I shall be always happy to become acquainted with his friends," replied my cousin, with a simplicity full of grace.

I had not before heard the sound of Princess Amelia's voice: imagine, my friend, the sweetest, the most delicious, the most harmonious tones; in fine, one of those accents which cause the most delicate cords of the soul to vibrate.

"I hope, my dear Henry, that you will remain some time with your aunt, to whom I am greatly attached. I respect her as a mother, as you know," said the grand-duke kindly, to me. "Come often to see us, familiarly, in the morning, at three o'clock. If we are going out, you can join us in our walk: you know I have always loved you, because you have one of the most noble hearts."

"I do not know how to express to your royal highness my gratitude for the kind reception you condescend to bestow on me."

"To prove to me your gratitude, then," said the prince, smiling, "ask your cousin for the second contra dance; the first belongs of right to the archduke."

"Will your highness grant me this favour?" said I to the Princess Amelia, bowing before her.

"Call each other simply cousins, after the good old German custom," said the grand-duke, gaily; "ceremony is not proper among relatives."

"Will my cousin do me she honour to dance this contra dance with me?"

"Yes, cousin," replied the Princess Amelia.

CHAPTER III.

PRINCE HENRY D'HERKAUSEN-OLDENZAAL, TO COUNT MAXIMILIAN KAMINETZ.

Oldenzaal, Aug. 25th, 1841.

I can hardly tell you, my friend, how pleased, and, at the same time, pained, I was at the fatherly cordiality of the grand-duke; the confidence he testified towards me, the affectionate kindness with which he induced his daughter and myself to substitute for the formula of etiquette these family terms of a most tender intimacy, all penetrated me with gratitude; I reproached myself so much the more bitterly for the fatal attraction of a love which ought not, or could not be agreeable to the prince.

I had promised myself, it is true (and I have not failed in this resolution), never to utter a word which might lead my cousin to suspect the love that I was nourishing; but I feared that my emotion, my glances, might betray me. In spite of myself, however, this sentiment, silent and concealed as it must be, seemed guilty to me.

I had time to make these reflections while the Princess Amelia was dancing the first contra dance with the Archduke Stanislaus. Here, as everywhere, dancing is no more than a kind of march which follows the measure of the orchestra; nothing could show to more advantage the serious grace of my cousin's carriage.

With a happiness mingled with anxiety, I awaited the moment for that conversation that the liberty of the ball would allow me to hold with her. I was sufficiently master of myself to conceal my embarrassment, as I went to seek her with the Marchioness d'Harville.

Thinking of the circumstances of the portrait, I expected to see the Princess Amelia share my embarrassment. I was not mistaken; I recall, almost word for word, our first conversation: let me relate it you, my friend:

"Will your highness permit me," said I to her, to say my cousin; "as the grand-duke has authorized me?

"Certainly, my cousin," she kindly answered me: "I am always happy to obey my father."

"And I am still more proud of this familiarity, my cousin; I have learned through my aunt to know you, that is to say, to appreciate you."

"My father has also spoken to me of you, cousin, and what will perhaps astonish you," added, she timidly, "I know you already, if I may say so, by sight. The lady superior of St. Hermangilda, for whom I have the most affectionate respect, one day showed to us, to my father and myself, a picture."

"Where I was represented as a page of the sixteenth century?"

"Yes, cousin, and my father even used the little deceit of telling me that this portrait was of one of our relations of the olden time, adding such kind words towards this cousin of former days, that our family must be happy to number him among our relations of the present day."

"Alas! my cousin, I fear I resemble no more the moral portrait that the grand-duke designed to make of me, than I do the page of the sixteenth century."

"You deceive yourself, cousin," said the princess to me, gaily; "For at the end of the concert, casting my eyes, by chance, towards the side gallery, I recognised you directly, in spite of the difference of costume."

Then, wishing, undoubtedly, to change a subject of conversation that embarrassed her she said to me,

"What a wonderful talent M. Liszt possesses! do you not think so?"

"Wonderful. With what pleasure you listened to him!"

"Because, indeed, it seems to me there is a double charm in music without words; not only is it played with excellent execution, but we can in a moment apply our own thoughts to the melodies that we hear, and which become, so to speak, their accompaniment. I know not if you understand me, cousin?"

"Perfectly. Our thoughts are, then, the words that we adapt mentally to the air that we hear."

"Just so, just so: you understand me," said she to me, with an expression of pleased satisfaction; "I fear I should explain but ill what I felt just now, while listening to that melody, so plaintive and so touching."

"God grant, my cousin," said I to her, smiling, "that you may have no words to put to an air so sad?"

Either because my question was indiscreet, and she wished to avoid answering me, or because she had not understood it, the Princess Amelia immediately said to me, pointing out the grand-duke, who, giving his arm to the Archduchess Sophia, was then traversing the dancing gallery.

"Cousin, look at my father: how handsome he is! how noble and fine his air! how eagerly all glances follow him! It seems to me he is more beloved even than he is revered."

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "it is not only here in the midst of this court that he is cherished. If the blessings of the people should be echoed to posterity, the name of Rudolf of Gerolstein would be, with justice, immortal!"

In speaking thus, my enthusiasm was sincere; for you know, my friend, that the dominions of the prince are, with good reason, called the Paradise of Germany.

It is impossible to paint to you the grateful glance my cousin threw upon me, on hearing me speak in this manner.

"To appreciate my father thus," said she to me, with emotion, "is to be worthy of the attachment he bears to you."

"And can no one but myself love and admire him! Besides, those rare qualities that make great princes, has he not the genius of kindness that makes princes adored?"

"You know not how truly you speak," exclaimed the princess, still more moved.

"Ah, I know—I know it, and all those whom he governs know it as I do. They love him so much that they mourn in his sorrows, as they rejoice in his happiness; the eagerness of all to come and offer their homage to the Marchioness d'Harville, is bestowed on the choice of his royal highness, as well as the true worth of the future grand-duchess."

"The Marchioness d'Harville is more worthy than any one of the attachment of my father; this is the highest praise of her I can give you."

"And you can, doubtless, appreciate her justly. Have you not known her in France, my cousin?"

Hardly had I uttered these words, when some sudden thought, I know not what, came into the Princess Amelia's mind; she cast down her eyes, and, for a second, her features wore an expression of sadness, that made me silent with surprise.

We were then at the end of the contra-dance; the last figure separated me a moment from my cousin; when I led her back to the Marchioness d'Harville, it seemed to me her features were still slightly moved.

I believed, and I believe still, that my allusion to the abode of the princess in France, having recalled to her the death of her mother, created in her the painful impression, of which I have just spoken to you.

During this evening, I remarked a circumstance which will, perhaps, appear to you puerile, but which has been to me a new proof of the fascination this young girl inspires in all. Her bandeau of pearls being a little deranged, the Archduchess Sophia, who was leaning upon her arm, was kind enough to be willing herself to replace the bijou upon her brow. Now, to one who knows the proverbial hauteur of the archduchess, such an act of graciousness from her seems scarcely conceivable. Besides, the Princess Amelia, whom I was observing attentively at the moment, appeared at the same time so confused, so grateful, I might almost say, so embarrassed at this graceful attention, that I thought I saw a tear sparkle in her eyes.

Such, my friend, was my first evening at Gerolstein. If I have related it to you with some detail, it is that almost all these circumstances have since had their results for me.

I will now abridge: I will only speak to you of some of the principal circumstances relating to my frequent interviews with my cousin and her father.

The day after this fete, I was among the very small number of persons invited to the celebration of the marriage of the grand-duke and the Marchioness d'Harville. I never saw the countenance of the Princess Amelia, more radiant and more serene than during this ceremony. She gazed upon her father and the marchioness with a kind of religious ecstasy, that gave a new charm to her features; it might have been said that they reflected the ineffable happiness of the prince and the Marchioness d'Harville.

That day my cousin was very gay, very affable. I gave her my arm in a walk that we took after dinner in the palace gardens, which were magnificently illuminated. She said to me, on speaking of her father's marriage,

"It seems to me that the happiness of those we cherish is yet more sweet to us than our own; for is there not always a shade of selfishness in the enjoyment of our own personal happiness?"

If I give you, from among a thousand, this reflection of my cousin's, my friend, it is that you may judge of the heart of this adorable creature, who possesses, like her father, the spirit of goodness.

Some days after the marriage of the grand-duke, I held quite a long conversation with him. He asked me of the past, of my plans for the future; he gave me the wisest counsel, the most flattering encouragement; he even spoke to me of several of his plans for government, with a confidence that made me feel as proud as I was flattered; in short—shall I tell it to you? For one moment a most foolish idea crossed my mind; I fancied that the prince had imagined my love, and that in this conversation he wished to study me, feel my sentiments, and perhaps lead me to an avowal.

Unhappily, this mad hope did not last long; the prince brought the conversation to a close by telling me that the time for great wars had passed away; that I ought to profit by my name, my connexions, the education I had received, and the intimate friendship that had united my father and Prince M., prime minister to the emperor, and pass through the diplomatic, instead of the military career; adding, that all the questions which were decided formerly upon the battle-field, would henceforth be decided by Congresses; that soon the intricate and base tradition of ancient diplomacy would give place to an enlarged and *humane* system of politics concerning the true interests of the people, who from day to day gained more knowledge of their rights; that a high, loyal, and generous spirit might have, before many years, a noble and great part to play in political affairs, and might thus do much good; he proposed to me, in short, the assistance of his high patronage to facilitate me at the outset of the career in which he solicited me to embark.

You understand, my friend, that if the prince had had the least design upon me, he had not made me such overtures. I thanked him for his offers with warm gratitude, adding, that I felt all the worth of his counsel, and was determined to follow it.

I had at first used some reserve in my visits to the palace, but in consequence of the urgency of the grand-duke, I soon went there every day about three o'clock. They lived there in all the simplicity of our German courts. It was the life of the great castles in England, rendered still more attractive by the cordial simplicity, the pleasing liberty of German manners. When the weather permitted, we took long rides with the grand-duke, the grand-duchess, my cousin, and the people of their household. When we remained in the palace we were occupied with music. I sang with the grand-duchess and my cousin, whose voice was of a tone of unequalled sweetness and purity—such that I could never hear it, without being moved even to the depths of my soul. At other times we examined in detail the wonderful collections of pictures and works of art, or the admirable library of the prince, who, you know, is one of the most learned and best-informed men in Europe; frequently I returned to dine at the palace, and on opera days I accompanied the grand-ducal family to the theatre.

Every day passed like a dream: my cousin gradually came to treat me with a true sisterly familiarity; she did not conceal from me the pleasure that she felt in seeing me; she confided to me all that interested her. Two or three times she begged me to accompany her when she went with the grand-duchess to visit the young orphans; often, also, she spoke to me of my future plans with a maturity of reason, a serious and reflective interest, that astonished me, coming from a girl of her age; she was very fond, too, of inquiring of my infancy, and of my mother, alas! ever regretted. Every time that I wrote to my father she begged me to recall her to his remembrance; then, for she embroidered to admiration, she gave me one day for him a charming piece of tapestry, upon which she had worked for a long time. What more shall I tell you, my friend? a brother and sister, meeting again after a long separation, would not have enjoyed a sweeter intimacy. Let me add, that when, by some unusual chance, we were left alone, the entrance of a third could never have changed the subject, or even the accent of our conversation.

You will be, perhaps, astonished, my friend, at this brotherly feeling between two young people, especially as you recall what I have acknowledged to you; but the more confidence and familiarity my cousin showed me, the more I watched over, the more I constrained myself, for fear of putting an end to the adorable familiarity. And then, what increased still more my reserve, the princess showed, in her intercourse with me, so much frankness, so much noble confidence, and especially so little coquetry, that I am almost certain that she has always been ignorant of my violent passion, though there remains a slight doubt on this subject, arising from a circumstance that I will relate immediately.

If this brotherly intercourse could always have lasted, perhaps this happiness might have been sufficient for me; but even while I was enjoying this with delight, I reflected that my service, or the new career in which the prince was inducing me to engage would soon call me to Vienna or abroad; I reflected, in short, that presently, perhaps, the grand duke would think of marrying his daughter in a manner worthy her.

These thoughts became the more painful to me as the moment of my departure approached. My cousin soon observed the change that was at work in me. The evening before the day I left her, she told me for a long time she had found me gloomy and abstracted. I endeavoured to elude her questions; I attributed my sadness to a vague ennui.

"I cannot believe you," said she to me: "my father treats you almost as a son; everybody loves you; to be unhappy would be ingratitude."

"Ah, well!" said I to her, without being able to conquer my emotion, "it is not ennui: it is grief—yes, a penetrating grief that I feel."

"And why? What has happened to you?" she asked me, with interest.

"Just now, my cousin, you told me that your father treated me as a son; that here everybody loved me. Ah! well, before long I must renounce these precious attachments: I must, in short, leave Gerolstein, and I confess to you, this thought fills me with despair."

"And the remembrance of those that are dear to us—is this then, nothing, my cousin?"

"Ah, yes—but years, but events bring so many unforeseen changes!"

"There are at least attachments which are not changed; such as my father has always shown you. What I feel for you is of this kind,

you know full well; we are brother and sister—never to forget one another," added she, raising towards me her large blue eyes, filled with tears.

This glance overwhelmed me; I was on the point of betraying myself; fortunately, I restrained myself.

"It is true, that feeling lasts," said I to her, in an embarrassed manner; "but circumstances alter. For instance, my cousin, when in a few years I shall return, do you think that then this intimacy, whose charm I value so fully, may yet continue?"

"Why should it not continue?"

"Because you will then be, undoubtedly, married, my cousin—you will have other duties—and you will have forgotten your poor brother."

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I swear to you, my friend, I said no more to her. I know not yet if she saw in these words an avowal which was displeasing to her, or whether she, like myself, was sadly struck by the inevitable changes that the future must necessarily make in our intercourse; but, instead of answering me she remained a moment silent, overwhelmed; then rising suddenly, her countenance pale and disordered, she went out, after examining some embroidery by the young Countess d'Oppenheim, one of her ladies of honour, who was working in the embrasure of one of the windows of the saloon where our conversation took place.

The evening of this day I received a new letter from my father, which recalled me suddenly here. The next morning I went to take leave of the grand duke; he told me that my cousin was a little unwell, that I might entrust to him my last words to her; he pressed me to his heart, like a father, regretting, he added, my sudden departure, and especially that this departure was occasioned by the anxiety that the health of my father gave me; then recalling to me, with the greatest kindness, his counsel on the subject of the new career which he begged me to embrace immediately, he added, that on my return from my embassies, or on my leaves of absence, he should see me again at Gerolstein with warm pleasure.

Happily, on my arrival here I found the state of my father a little improved; he still keeps his bed, and is constantly feeble, but his health no longer gives me any serious anxiety. Unfortunately, he has already noticed my depression, my gloomy taciturnity, several times; but he has supplicated me in vain to confide to him the cause of my melancholy grief. I should not dare it, notwithstanding his blind tenderness for me; you know his severity as regards everything which appears to him wanting in frankness and loyalty. Yesterday, I watched with him; when alone by his side, believing him asleep, I could not restrain my tears, which flowed in silence as I thought of my happy days at Gerolstein. He saw me weep, for he soon awaked while I was absorbed in my grief: he questioned me with the most touching kindness; I attributed my sadness to the anxiety that his health had caused me, but he was not deceived by this evasion.

Now that you know all, my good Maximilian, say, is not my fate forlorn enough! What shall I do—what resolve?

* * * * * *

Ah, my friend, I cannot tell you my anguish. What is to happen, my God! All is utterly lost! I am the most wretched of men if my father does not renounce his project.

I will tell you what has just happened; just now I had finished this letter, when, to my great astonishment, my father, whom I believed in bed, entered my cabinet, where I was writing to you; he saw upon my desk my first four great pages all filled; I was at the end of this last—

"To whom do you write to so at length?" he asked me, smiling.

"To Maximillian, father."

"Oh!" said he to me, with an expression of affectionate reproach, "I know that he possessed your confidence entirely; *he is very happy—he!*"

He pronounced these last words so sadly, in such a wounded tone, that, touched by his accent, I replied to him, giving him my letter, almost without reflection,

"Read, father."

My friend, he has read all. Do you know what he said to me, after remaining for some time thoughtful?

"Henry, I am going to write to the grand duke all that passed during your stay at Gerolstein."

"My father, I conjure you, do not do it."

"Is what you relate to Maximillan perfectly true."

"Yes, my father!"

"In this case, until now, your conduct has been upright. The prince will appreciate it. But in future you should not show yourself unworthy of his noble confidence; you would do so if, abusing his offer, you should return hereafter to Gerolstein, with the intention, perhaps, of making yourself beloved by his daughter."

"My father, could you think—?"

"I think that you love with passion, and that passion is, sooner or later, an evil counsellor."

"How, my father? you will write to the prince that—"

"'You love your cousin desperately.'

"In the name of Heaven, my father, I supplicate you, do nothing of this!"

"Do you love your cousin?"

"I love her to idolatry; but—"

My father interrupted me.

"If this is the case, I shall write to the grand duke to demamd of him for you the hand of his daughter."

"But, my father, such a claim is madness for me!"

"It is true; nevertheless, I ought frankly to make this demand of the prince, representing to him the reasons that lead me to this step.

He has received you with the most true hospitality, he has shown you fatherly kindness; it would be unworthy me and you to deceive him. I know the greatness of his soul; he will feel that I am dealing as an honest man; if he refuses to give you his daughter, and this is almost unquestionable, he will know at least that in future, if you should return to Gerolstein, you ought to be no more in the same intimacy with her. You have shown me, my child," added his father, kindly, "the letter that you have written to Maximillian. I am now informed of everything; it is my duty to write to the grand duke, and I am going to write this very moment."

You know, my friend, that my father is the best of men, but he has an inflexible tenacity of will when the question is what regards his *duty*; judge of my anguish, my terror. Though the step he is going to take may be, after all, frank and honourable, it does not trouble me less. How will the grand duke receive this mad offer? Will he not be displeased with it? and will not the Princess Amelia be as much wounded that I have allowed my father to take such a step without her consent?

"Ah, my friend, pity me, I know not what to think. It seems as though I were looking upon an abyss, and that a dizziness were coming over me.

I finish in haste this long letter; I shall write you soon. Yet once more pity me, for, in truth, I fear I shall become crazy if the fever that excites me lasts longer. Adieu, adieu! Yours from my heart, and ever

HENRY D'H. O.

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We now conduct our reader to the palace of Gerolstein, where Fleur de Marie had dwelt since her return from France.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRINCESS AMELIA.

THE apartment occupied by Fleur de Marie (we shall call her the Princess Amelia only officially), in the grand-ducal palace, had been furnished, by Rudolf's care, with extreme taste and elegance. From the balcony of the young girl's oratory, could be seen, in the distance, the two towers of the Convent of St. Hermangilda, which, rising above immense masses of verdure, were themselves commanded by a high wooded mountain, at the foot of which the abbey stood.

On a beautiful morning in summer, Fleur de Marie was allowing her glances to wander over this splendid landscape, which extended far away in the distance. Her hair was dressed, but she wore a morning dress of thin material, white, with narrow blue stripes; a large handkerchief of plain cambric falling upon her shoulders, left visible the two ends and the knot of a little silk cravat, of the same blue as the girdle of her dress.

Seated in a large, high-backed elbow chair, made of carved ebony and cramoisie velvet, her elbow supported by one arm of this seat, her head a little bent down, she supported her cheek upon the back of her small white hand, delicately veined with azure.

The languishing attitude of Fleur de Marie, her paleness, the fixedness of her gaze, the bitterness of her half-smile, revealed a deep melancholy.

After some moments, a heavy, sad sigh relieved her breast. Then letting her hand which supported her cheek fall again, she bent her head farther upon her breast. You would have said that the wretched girl was bending beneath the weight of some heavy misfortune.

At this moment a woman of mature age, with a grave and distinguished air, dressed in elegant simplicity, entered the oratory, almost timidly, and coughed slightly, to attract the attention of Fleur de Marie.

Arousing herself from her reverie, she raised her head quickly, and said, saluting her with a motion full of grace,

"What do you wish, my dear countess?"

"I come to inform your highness that my lord begs you to await him; for he will meet you here in a few minutes," replied Princess Amelia's maid of honour, with respectful formality.

"I was wondering that I had not yet saluted my father to-day; I wait his visit each morning with so much impatience! But I hope that I do not owe to any illness of Fraulein Harneim the pleasure of seeing you, my dear countess, at the palace two days in succession."

"Let your highness feel no uneasiness on that point, Fraulein Harneim has begged me to take her place to-day; to-morrow she will have the honour of resuming her service of your highness, who will perhaps excuse the change."

"Certainly, for I shall lose nothing by it; after having had the pleasure of seeing you two days in succession, my dear countess, I shall have for two other days, Fraulein Harneim with me."

"Your highness honours us," replied the maid of honour, bending again; "this extreme kindness encourages me to ask a favour?"

"Speak, speak; you know my eagerness to be of assistance to you."

"It is true that for a long time your highness has accustomed me to your goodness; but this regards a subject so painful, that I should not have the courage to enter upon it, if it did not concern a very deserving object; for this reason I dare to depend upon the extreme indulgence of your highness."

"You have no need of my indulgence, my dear countess; I am always very grateful for every occasion that is given me for doing a little good."

"This concerns a poor creature who, unfortunately, had quitted Gerolstein before your highness had established that institution, which is so charitable, and so useful for young orphan or forsaken girls, whom nothing protects from evil passions?"

"And what has happened to her? what do you beg for her?"

"Her father a very adventurous man, went to seek his fortune in America, leaving his wife and daughter to a precarious mode of existence. The mother died; the daughter hardly sixteen years old when left to herself, quitted the country to follow to Vienna a seducer, who soon forsook her. Then, as always happens, the first step in the path of vice led this wretched girl to an abyss of infamy; in a short time she became, like so many other miserable creatures, the opprobrium of her sex."

Fleur de Marie cast down her eyes, blushed, and could not conceal a slight shudder, which did not escape the maid of honour. Fearing to have wounded the chaste susceptibility of the princess by conversing with her upon such a creature, she continued with embarrassment:

"I ask a thousand pardons of your royal highness; I have undoubtedly offended you by drawing your attention to so polluted a being; but the miserable one shows so sincere a repentance, that I thought I could solicit for her a little pity."

"And you were right. Go on, I pray you," said Fleur de Marie, conquering her sad emotion; "indeed all errors are worthy of pity, when repentance follows them."

"And that is the case here, as I have remarked to your highness. After two years of this abominable life, grace touched this abandoned one. A prey to a late remorse, she has returned here. Chance so favoured her, that, on her arrival here, she was lodged at a house belonging to a worthy widow, whose gentleness and piety are well know. Encouraged by the pious goodness of the widow, the poor creature has confessed to her her faults, adding that she felt a just horror for her past life, and that she would purchase, at the price of the most severe penance, the happiness of entering a religious house, where she might expiate her errors and deserve their redemption. The worthy widow to whom she has intrusted this confidence, knowing that I had the honour to serve your highness, has written to me to recommend to me this unfortunate one, who, by means of the all-powerful agency of your highness with the Princess Juliana, lady superior of the abbey, might hope to enter St. Hermangilda Abbey as lay sister; she asks as a favour to be employed in the most painful labours, that her penance may be more meritorious. I have several times desired to converse with this woman before allowing myself to implore for her the pity of your highness, and I am firmly convinced that her repentance will be lasting. It is neither want nor age that has brought her to the true good; she is scarcely eighteen years old; she is yet very beautiful, and possesses a small sum of money, that she wishes to devote to a charitable object if she obtains the favour that she solicits."

"I will take charge of her," said Fleur de Marie, restraining with difficulty her emotion, so much resemblance did her past life offer to that of the unfortunate one in whose favour she was solicited; she added, "the repentance of this miserable one is too praiseworthy to be left without encouragement."

"I know not how to express my gratitude to your highness. I hardly dared hope your highness would deign to be so charitably interested in such a creature."

"She has been guilty—she repents," said Fleur de Marie, with an accent of commiseration and inexpressible sadness; "it is right to nourish pity for her. The more sincere her remorse, the most painful must it be, my dear countess."

"I hear my lord, I believe," said the maid of honour, suddenly, without remarking the deep and increasing emotion of Fleur de Marie.

In fact Rudolf was entering a saloon which opened into the oratory, holding in his hand an enormous bunch of roses.

At the sight of the prince, the countess discreetly retired. Hardly had she disappeared, when Fleur de Marie threw herself upon her father's neck, resting her forehead upon his shoulder, and remained thus some seconds without speaking.

"Good morning, good morning, my dear child," said Rudolf, pressing his daughter to his breast with feeling, without yet observing her sadness. "See this mass of roses; what a fine harvest I gathered for you this morning; it was this that prevented me from coming sooner; I hope that I have never brought you a more magnificent bouquet. Take it."

And the prince, still holding his bouquet in his hand, moved backward gently, to disengage his daughter from his arms and look at her; but seeing her burst into tears, he threw the bouquet upon a table, took Fleur de Marie's hands in his, and exclaimed,

"You weep! Oh, what is the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing, my dear father," said Fleur de Marie, drying her tears, and endeavouring to smile upon Rudolf.

"Tell me, I beg you, what is the matter? What can have made you sad?"

"I assure you, father, it is nothing to distress you. The countess has just solicited my interest for a poor woman, so interesting, so unhappy; that in spite of myself I am moved by her recital."

"Truly? Is it only this?"

"It is only this," answered Fleur de Marie, taking from a table the flowers that Rudolf had thrown there; "but how you spoil me!" added she, "what a magnificent bouquet, and when I think that each day, you bring me such, gathered by yourself."

"My child," said Rudolf, gazing upon his daughter with anxiety, "you conceal something from me; your smile is sad—constrained. Tell me, I beg you, what distresses you; do not occupy yourself with this buoquet."

"Ah, you know this bouquet is my joy every morning; and then I love roses so much—I have always loved them so much. You remember," added she, with an affecting smile,

"you remember my poor little rose-bush. I have always kept its remains."

At this painful allusion to the past, Rudolf exclaimed,

"Unhappy child! Are my suspicions founded? In the midst of the splendour that surrounds you, would you yet sometimes think of that horrible time? Alas! I had thought to have made you forget it by tenderness."

"Pardon, pardon, father! these words escaped me. I make you sad."

"I am myself sad, poor angel," said Rudolf, sorrowfully, "because these returns to the past must be fearful to you—because they would poison your life if you were weak enough to abandon yourself to them."

"Father, this was by chance. Since our arrival here, this is the first time—"

"This is the first time you have spoken of it—yes; but, perhaps, this is not the first time that these thoughts have troubled you. I have perceived your moments of melancholy, and sometimes I have accused the past, as causing your sadness. But, as I was uncertain, I dared not even attempt to combat the sad influence of these remembrances—to show you the uselessness, the injustice of them—for if your grief had arisen from another cause, if the past had been to you what it ought to be, a vain, bad dream, I should risk awakening in you painful ideas, that I should wish to destroy."

"How good you are! how do these fears show me your ineffable tenderness!"

"What do you mean? My position was so difficult, so delicate. On another occasion I said nothing, but I was ever thinking of what concerned you. By contracting this marriage, which crowned all my desires, I also hoped to give another guarantee to your repose. I knew too well the excessive delicacy of your heart to hope that you could ever—ever cease to think of the past; but I said to myself, that if, by chance, your thoughts ever lingered there, you ought, feeling yourself cherished as a daughter by the noble woman who knew and loved you in the depth of your misfortunes—you ought, I say, to regard the past as sufficiently expiated for by your heavy miseries, and be indulgent, or rather just towards yourself; for, indeed, my wife is entitled by her high qualities to the respect of all—is it not so? Ah, well, since you are to her a daughter, a cherished sister, ought you not to be encouraged? Is not her tender attachment an entire redemption? Does it not tell you that she knows, as I do, that you have been a victim—that you are not guilty—that others can, indeed, reproach you only with *misfortune*, that has overwhelmed you from your birth? Had you even committed great faults, would they not be a thousand times expiated, redeemed, by all the good you have done, by all that is excellent and adorable that has been developed in you?"

"My father—"

"Ah, let me—let me tell you all my thoughts, since an accident, for which indeed we ought to be grateful, has caused this conversation. For a long time I have desired, and at the same time dreaded it. God will that it may have a salutary result! It was mine to make you forget so many dreadful sorrows, I have a mission to fulfil towards you so august, so sacred, that I should have had the courage to sacrifice for your repose my love for Madame d'Harville—my friendship for Murphy, if I had thought their presence would have recalled to you too bitterly the past."

"Oh, my good father, could you think so! Their presence, the presence of those who know *what I was*, and who yet love me tenderly, does not it, on the contrary, personify forgetfulness and pardon? Indeed, my father, would not my whole life have been made desolate, had you renounced for me your marriage with Madame d'Harville?"

"Ah! I should not have been the only one to desire this sacrifice, if it would secure your happiness. You know not what self-denial Clemence has already voluntarily imposed upon herself, for she also comprehends all the extent of my duty to you."

"Your duty to me, my God! And what have I done to merit so much?"

"What have you done, poor dear angel! Until the moment you were restored to me, your life was only bitterness, misery, desolation; and for your past sufferings I reproach myself as if I had caused them. And when I see you smiling, pleased, I believe myself pardoned; my only aim, my only wish is to render you as entirely happy, as you have been unfortunate; to raise you as much as you have been lowered, for it seems to me the last traces of the past are effaced when the most eminent, the most honourable persons pay you the respect which is due to you."

"Respect to me? no, no, my father; but to my rank, or, rather, to that you have given me."

"Ah! it is not your rank that is loved, that is revered—it is you, understand; indeed, my dear child, it is yourself, it is yourself alone. There is homage imposed by rank, but it is another imposed by powers of attraction and fascination! You know not how to distinguish between these, because you know not yourself; because you know not that, by a wonderful intelligence and tact, which renders me as proud as idolatrous of you, you carry into all ceremonious intercourse, so new to you, a union of dignity, modesty, and grace, which is irresistible, to the most stately characters."

"You love me so much, father, and all love you so much, that every one is sure of pleasing you by showing me deference."

"Oh, the wicked child!" exclaimed Rudolf, interrupting his daughter, and embracing her tenderly; "what a wicked child, who will not grant a single satisfaction to my fatherly pride!"

"Is not this pride sufficiently satisfied by attributing to you the good feeling that is shown me, my good father.

"No, indeed, miss," said the prince, smiling to his daughter, to chase away the sadness with which he still saw her affected, "no, miss,

it is not the same thing; for it is not allowable for me to be proud of myself, and I can and ought to proud of you—yes, proud. And again, you know not how divinely you are endowed; in fifteen months your education has become so marvellously complete, that the most difficult mother would be satisfied with you, and this education has increased still more the almost irresistible influence that you spread around you without being yourself aware of it."

"My father, your praises confuse me."

"I speak the truth, nothing but the truth. Do you wish for instances? Let us speak boldly of the past: it is an enemy that I wish to fight hand to hand; we must look it in the face. Do you not, then, remember La Louve, that courageous woman who saved you? Recall that prison scene which you have related to me; a crowd of prisoners, more hardened indeed than wicked, were bent upon tormenting one of their companions, feeble, infirm, and yet their drudge; you appear, you speak, and behold immediately these furies, blushing for their base cruelty towards their victim, show themselves as charitable as they were wicked. Is this, then, nothing? Again, is it—yes, or no—owing to you that La Louve, that ungovernable woman, has felt repentance, and desired an honest and laborious life? Ah, believe me, my dear child, that which conquered La Louve and her turbulent companions, merely by the ascendency of goodness, combined with a rare elevation of mind; this, although in other circumstances and in an utterly different sphere, must by the same charm (do not smile at such a parallel, miss) fascinate the stately Archduchess Sophia and all the circle of my court; for the good and wicked, great and small, submit almost always to the influence of higher, nobler spirits. I do not wish to say that you were *born princess* in the aristocratic sense of the word; that would be a poor flattery to make you, my child; but you are of that small number of privileged beings who are born both to speak to a queen so as to charm her, and to earn her love, and also to speak to a poor, debased, and abandoned creature, so as to make her better, to console her, and thus gain her adoration."

"But, my dear father, I beg—"

"Oh, it is so much the worse for you, darling, that it is so long since my heart has poured forth. Think, then, how, with my fear of awakening in you the remembrances of the past which I wish to annihilate, and that I will for ever annihilate in your mind, I dared not converse to you of these comparisons, these parallels, which render you so admirable in my eyes. How many times have Clemence and I been enraptured with you! How many times, moved so that the tears rose in her eyes, has she said, to me, 'Is it not wonderful that this child should be what she is, after misfortune has so pursued her? or, rather,' would Clemence continue, 'is it not wonderful that, far from impairing that noble and rare nature, misfortune has, on the contrary, given a higher range to what there was excellent in her?"

At this moment the door opened, and Clemence, grand duchess of Gerolstein, entered, holding a letter in her hand.

"Here, my friend," said she to Rudolf, "is a letter from France. I wished to bring it to you, that I might say good-morning to my indolent child, whom I have not seen this morning," added Clemence, embracing Fleur de Marie tenderly.

"This letter comes just at the right moment," said Rudolf, gaily, after having read it through. "We were talking just now of the past; of that monster we must incessantly combat, my dear Clemence, for it threatens the repose and happiness of our dear child."

"Is this true, my friend? those attacks of melancholy which we have observed—"

"Have no other cause than wicked remembrances; but, fortunately, we now know our enemy, and we will triumph over it."

"But from whom, then, is this letter, my friend?" asked Clemence.

"From Rigolette, the wife of Germain."

"Rigolette?" exclaimed Fleur de Marie; "what happiness to hear from her!"

"My friend," said Clemence, aside to Rudolf, at the same time glancing at Fleur de Marie, "do you not fear that this letter may recall to her painful recollections?"

"These are those very remembrance, I wish to put an end to, my dear Clemence; we must approach them boldly, and I am sure that I shall find in Rigolette's letter excellent arms against them, for this excellent little creature adored our child, and appreciated her as she should be."

And Rudolf read aloud the following letter:

"Bouqueval Farm, Aug. 15th, 1841.

"YOUR HIGHNESS,

"I take the liberty of writing to you again to make you a sharer of a great happiness which has befallen us, and to ask a new favour of you, to whom we already owe so many, or rather, to whom we owe the perfect paradise in which we live, I, my Germain, and his good mother.

"This is the cause, my lord; for ten days I have been mad with joy, for it is ten days since I have possessed the love of a little girl; I fancy that she is the very picture of Germain; he, that she is of me; our dear mamma Georges says that she resembles both; the fact is, she has charming blue eyes like Germain, and black hair, curly, like mine. Just now, contrary to his custom, my husband is unjust; he wishes to have our little one always upon his knees, while it is my right, is it not, my lord?"

"Fine, worthy young persons! they ought to be happy," said Rudolf. "If ever couple were well matched, it is they."

"And Rigolette deserves her happiness," said Fleur de Marie.

"I have always blessed the good fortune that

caused me to meet them," said Rudolf, and he continued :

"But, indeed, my lord, pardon my burdening you with these little family quarrels that end always with a kiss. Certainly your ears must tingle well, my lord, for there does not pass a day that we do not say, looking at each other, we two, Germain and I, 'How happy we are, O God, how happy we are!' and naturally your name follows directly after these words. Excuse the scrawl there is just here, my lord, and the blot ; I had written without thinking M. Rudolf, as I used to say, and I have scratched it out. I hope, by-the-way, that you will find my writing has improved much, as well as my orthography, for Germain always shows me how, and I no longer make great blots stretching all across, as when you made my pens.

"I must confess," said Rudolf, laughing, "that my friend is under a slight illusion, and I am sure that Germain is occupied rather with kissing the hand of his pupil than directing it."

"Come, come, my dear, you are right," said Clemence, looking at the letter, "the writing is rather large, but very legible."

"In truth, there is some progress," said Rudolf ; "formerly it would have taken eight pages to contain what she writes now in two."

And he continued :

"It is, however, true that you have made pens for me, my lord ; when we think of it, Germain and I, we are quite ashamed, in recalling how far from proud you were. Oh, here again do I find myself speaking to you of something besides what we wish to ask you, my lord ; for my husband unites with me, and it is very important ; we have formed a plan. You shall see.

"We supplicate you, then, my lord, to have the goodness to choose and give us a name for our dear girl ; it is agreed upon with the godfather and godmother, and this godfather and godmother, do you know who they are, my lord! Two persons whom you and her ladyship the Marchioness d'Harville have raised from misery to render happy, happy as we are. In a word, they are Morel, the jeweller, and Jeanne Duport, the sister of a poor prisoner named Pique-Vinaigre, a worthy woman whom I saw in prison when I went to visit my poor Germain there, and whom, afterward, her ladyship, the marchioness, brought out from the hospital.

"Now, my lord, you must know why we have chosen M. Morel for godfather, and Jeanne Duport for godmother. We said one to another, Germain and I, this will be a way of thanking M. Rudolf again for his kindness, by taking for godfather and godmother of our little girl worthy people who owe every thing to him and to the marchioness, without taking into consideration that Morel the jeweller and Jeanne Duport are the cream of honest people. They are of our class, and besides, as Germain and I say, they are our kindred in happiness, for they are like us, of the family of your proteges, my lord."

"Oh, father, has not this idea a charming delicacy," said Fleur de Marie, with emotion, "to take as godfather and godmother of their child those who owe everything to you and my second mother."

"You are right, dear child," said Clemence ; "I am most deeply touched by this token."

"And I am very glad that I have so well bestowed my benefits," said Rudolf, continuing to read.

"Besides, with the aid of the money you have given him, M. Rudolf, Morel is now a dealer in precious stones ; he gains something to bring up his family upon, and the means of teaching his children some trade. The good Louise will, I think, marry a worthy labourer, who loves and respects her, as he should, for she has been unfortunate, but not guilty, and the betrothed of Louise has heart enough to understand this."

"I was very certain," exclaimed Rudolf, addressing his daughter, "of finding in dear little Rigolette's letter, arms against our enemy! You hear, it is the expression of the plain common sense of this honest and upright soul. She says of Louise, 'She has been unfortunate, but not guilty, and her betrothed has heart enough to understand this.'"

Fleur de Marie more and more moved and saddened by the reading of this letter, trembled at the glance that her father fixed upon her, for a moment, as he emphasized the above last words.

The prince continued :

"I will tell you also, my lord, that Jeanne Duport, through the generosity of the marchioness, has been able to be separated from her husband, that wicked man who ate her out of everything and beat her ; she has taken her eldest daughter with her, and she keeps a little lace shop, where she sells what she and her children make ; their trade prospers. There is nowhere such happy people, and thanks to whom! thanks to you, my lord, to the marchioness, who both know how to give so much, and to give to so good purpose.

"By-the-way, Germain will write to you as usual, my lord, at the end of the month, on the subject of the Bank for Labourers out of employment, and of gratuitous loans ; the reimbursements are seldom behindhand, and we perceive already much good that this spreads in this quarter. Now, at least, poor families can get through the dull season for work without putting their linens and beds in pledge. Then when work returns, you should see with what spirit they put themselves to it ; they are so proud that confidence is placed in their work and their probity! And, indeed, it is not only this you should see. Besides, how they bless you for having lent them the wherewithal! Yes, my lord, they bless you, *you* ; for, although you say you have done nothing in its institution but to nominate Germain for head cashier, and that it is an unknown who has done this good work, we like better to believe that it is to you we owe it ; it is more natural.

"Besides, there is a famous trumpet to repeat on every occasion that it is you we should bless; this trumpet is Madame Pipelet, who repeats to every one that it is only her *prince of tenants* (excuse me M. Rudolf, she always calls you so) who can have done this charitable work, and her Darling Alfred is of her opinion. As to him, he is so proud and so pleased with his office of bank porter, that he says that the employment of M. Cabrion would be nothing to him. To end your family of protegees, my lord, I will add that Germain has read in the papers that Martial, a planter in Algiers, had been spoken of with great praises for the courage he had shown in repulsing, at the head of his farmers, an attack of thievish Arabs, and that his wife, as intrepid as himself, had been slightly wounded in the side while she was discharging her gun like a real grenadier. From that time, they say in the papers, she has been called 'Mrs. Rifle!'

"Excuse this long letter, my lord, but I thought you would not be sorry to hear from us concerning those whose good Providence you have been. I write you from the farm at Bouqueval where we have been since spring with our good mother. Germain leaves every morning for his business, and returns at night. In the autumn we shall go back to live in Paris. How strange it is, M. Rudolf, I, who never loved the country, adore it now. I make it clear to myself: it is because Germain loves it so much. Speaking of the farm, M. Rudolf, you, who undoubtedly know where that good little Goualeuse is—if you have an opportunity, tell her how we always remember her as one of the sweetest and best beings in the world; and that I myself, never think of our happinesss without saying, since M. Rudolf was also the M. Rudolf of dear Fleur de Marie, through his care she must be as happy as we; and this makes my happiness yet more perfect.

"How I run on! What will you say to me, my lord? But oh! you are so good? And then, you see, it is your fault if I chatter as much and as joyously as Papa Cretu and Ramonette, who no longer dare to rival me in singing. Indeed, M. Rudolf, I can tell you, I put it into their mouths.

"You will not refuse us one request, will you, my lord? If you give a name to our dear little child, it seems to us it will bring her good fortune, it will be like a happy star for her; believe it, M. Rudolf, sometimes my good Germain and I almost congratulate ourselves for having known so much sorrow, because we feel doubly how happy our child will be not to know what is the misery through which we have passed.

"If I close by telling, M. Rudolf, that we endeavour to aid poor people here and there, according to our means, it is not to boast of ourselves, but that you may know we do not keep to ourselves alone all the happiness you have given us; besides, we always say to those we succour, 'It is not we that you must thank and bless, it is M. Rudolf, the best, most generous man that there is in the world;' and they take you for a kind of *saint*, if nothing more.

"Adieu, my lord! believe me, when our little girl shall begin to spell, the first word she shall read will be your name, M. Rudolf, and afterwards, those words you caused to be written upon my wedding gift,

'Labour and wisdom—honour and happiness.'

"With the help of these four words, our tenderness and our care, we hope, my lord, that our child will be always worthy to speak the name of him who has been our good Providence, and that of all the wretched ones he has known.

"Pardon, my lord, for finishing thus; I have such large tears in my eyes—they are good tears—excuse, if you please—it is not my fault—but I cannot see clearly, so that I write badly.

"I have the honour, my lord, to salute you with as much respect as gratitude,

"RIGOLETTE GERMAIN.

"P.S.—Oh! my lord, in reading over my letter, I perceive that I have very often written *M. Rudolf*. You will pardon me? I may hope so? You know well that under one name or another, we respect and bless you the same, my lord."

"Dear little Rigolette," said Clemence, softened by the letter which Rudolf had just read. "This simple epistle is full of sensibility."

"Undoubtedly," replied Rudolf, "a benefit was never better bestowed. Our friend is endowed with an excellent disposition; she has a heart of gold, and our dear child appreciates her as we do," added he, addressing his daughter. Then, struck with her paleness and emotion, he cried,

"But what is the matter?"

"Alas, what a sad contrast between my position and Rigolette's. Work and wisdom—honour and happiness—those four words tell all that has happened to her. A laborious and sensible daughter, a beloved wife, a happy mother, an honoured woman—such is her destiny—while I—"

"Great God, what are you saying?"

"Pardon, my good father, do not accuse me of ingratitude, but notwithstanding your ineffable tenderness, notwithstanding that of my second mother, notwithstanding your sovereign power, notwithstanding the respect and splendour with which I am surrounded, my shame is incurable. Nothing can annihilate the past—once more, pardon me, my father: I have until now concealed it from you, but the remembrance of my former degradation throws me into despair—it kills me."

"Clemence, do you hear her?" cried Rudolf, in despair.

"But, my poor child," said Clemence, taking affectionately the hands of Fleur de Marie in her own, "our tenderness, the affection of those who surround you, and which you so well merit does not all this prove to you that the

past should be to you only a vain and bad dream?"

"Oh, fatality, fatality," resumed Rudolf. "Now I curse my fears and silence; that sad idea, so long rooted in her mind, has made there, unknown to us, dreadful ravages, and it is too late to contend against this deplorable error; alas! how unfortunate I am."

"Courage, my dear," said Clemence to Rudolf; "you just now said it is better to know the enemy which threatens us. We now know the cause of our dear child's sorrow; we shall triumph over it, because we shall have reason, justice, and tenderness on our side."

"And then at last, because she will see that her affliction, if it were incurable, would render ours incurable also," replied Rudolf, "for in truth it would be to despair of all justice, human and Divine, if our poor child had only a change of sufferings."

After a silence of some moments, during which Fleur de Marie appeared to be collecting herself, she took with one hand Rudolf's, with the other Clemence's, and said to them with a voice expressive of deep emotion,

"Listen to me, my good father, and you also my loving mother this day is a solemn one — God has granted, and I thank him for it, that it should be impossible for me to conceal from you any longer what I feel. In a little time I should, in any event, have made to you the confession you are now about to hear, for all suffering has an end, and concealed as mine has been, I should not have been able to keep silence to you much longer."

"Oh! I understand all," cried Rudolf; "there is no longer any hope for her."

"I hope for the future, my father, and this hope gives me strength to speak to you thus."

"And what can you hope for the future, my poor child, since your present fate causes you only grief and bitterness?"

"I am going to tell you, my father; but before all, permit me to recall the past to you, to own to you before God who hears me, what I have felt up to this time."

"Speak, speak, we hear you," said Rudolf, seating himself with Clemence by Fleur de Marie.

"While I remained at Paris, near you, my father," said Fleur de Marie, "I was so happy, oh, so completely happy, that those delicious days would not be too well paid for by years of suffering. You see I have at least known what happiness is."

"During some days perhaps."

"Yes, but what pure and unmingled felicity! Love surrounded me then, as ever, with the tenderest care. I gave myself up without fear to the emotions of gratitude and affection which every moment raised my heart to you. The future dazzled me: a father to adore, a second mother to love doubly, for she had taken the place of my own, whom I had never known — I must own everything; my pride was excited in spite of myself, so much was I honoured in belonging to you. When the few persons of your household, who at Paris had occasion to speak to me, called me 'your highness,' I could not prevent myself from being proud of this title. If I thought then, at times, vaguely of the past, it was to say to myself, 'I, formerly so humble, the beloved daughter of a sovereign prince who is blessed and revered by every one; I, formerly so miserable, I am enjoying all the splendours of luxury, and of an almost royal existence.' Alas! my father, my fortune was so unforeseen, your power surrounded me with such a splendid eclat, that I was excusable perhaps in allowing myself to become so blinded."

"Excusable! nothing was more natural, my poor beloved angel; what wrong was there in being proud of a rank which was your own, of enjoying the advantages of the position to which I had restored you? At that time I recollect you were delightfully gay; how many times have I seen you fall into my arms as if overpowered with happiness, and heard you say to me with an enchanting accent, 'My father, it is too much, too much happiness.' Unfortunately, these are only recollections; they lulled me into a deceitful security, and since then I have not been enough alarmed at the cause of your melancholy."

"But tell us, then my child," asked Clemence, "what has changed into sadness this pure, this legitimate joy which you first felt?"

"Alas! a very sad and entirely unforeseen circumstance."

"What circumstance?"

"You recollect, my father," said Fleur de Marie, without being able to conquer a shuddering of horror; "you remember the sad scene which preceded our departure from Paris, when your carriage was stopped near the barrier?"

"Yes," replied Rudolf, sadly. "Brave Slasher, after having again saved my life; he died there before us, saying, 'Heaven is just: I have killed, they kill me.'"

"Oh, well, father, at the moment when this unfortunate man was expiring, do you know whom I saw looking intently at me? Oh, that look, that look! it has pursued me ever since," added Fleur de Marie, shuddering.

"What look? of whom do you speak?" cried Rudolf.

"Of the Ogress of the White Rabbit," murmured Fleur de Marie.

"That monster seen again! where!"

"You did not perceive her in the tavern where the Slasher breathed his last. She was among the women who surrounded him."

"Oh, now," said Rudolf, dejectedly, "I understand: already struck with terror by the murder of the Slasher, you thought there was something providential in this dreadful meeting."

"It is but too true, my father. At the sight of the Ogress I felt a mortal shudder. It seemed to me that, under her look, my heart, until then radiant with happiness and hope, was suddenly frozen. Yes; to meet this wo-

man at the moment when the Slasher was dying and repeating the words 'Heaven is just,' this seemed to me a providential reproof of my proud forgetfulness of the past, which I ought to expiate by humiliation and repentance."

"But the past was laid upon you: you can answer for it before High Heaven!"

"You were constrained, intoxicated, unfortunate child. Once precipitated, in spite of yourself in this abyss, you could not leave it notwithstanding your remorse, your terror, your despair, thanks to the atrocious indifference of that society of which you were the victim. You saw yourself for ever chained in that cavern; the chance which placed you in my path could alone have dragged you from it."

"And then, my child, as your father has told you, you were the victim, not the accomplice, of the infamy," cried Clemence.

"But to this infamy, I have submitted, my mother," sadly rejoined Fleur de Marie; "nothing can annihilate these horrible recollections. They pursue me incessantly, no longer as formerly, in the midst of the peaceable inhabitants of a farm, or of the degraded women, my companions in Saint Lazare, but they pursue me even to this palace, peopled with the elite of Germany. They pursue me even to the arms of my father, even to the steps of his throne."

Fleur de Marie melted into tears. Rudolf and Clemence remained mute before this frightful expression of invincible remorse. They, too, wept, for they felt the powerlessness of their consolations.

"Since then," resumed Fleur de Marie, drying her tears, "every moment of the day, I say to myself, with bitter shame, 'I am honoured, I am revered; the most eminent and most venerable, surround me with respect; in sight of the whole court, the sister of an emperor has deigned to fasten the bandeau upon my head; yet I have lived in the mud of the city—have been spoken to familiarly by thieves and assassins!' Oh, father! forgive me! but the more my position is elevated, the more I have been struck with the profound degradation into which I had fallen. At each new homage which is rendered me I feel myself guilty of a profanation. Think of it, oh, heaven! after having been what *I have been* to suffer old men to bow before me—to suffer noble young women, women justly respected, who feel themselves flattered to approach me—to suffer, finally, that princesses, doubly august by age and by their sacerdotal character, should heap upon me favours and praises, is not this impious and sacrilegious? And then, if you knew, my father, what I have suffered—what I still suffer every day, in saying, 'If it should please God that the past should be known, with what merited scorn would she be treated who is now elevated so high. What a just—what a frightful punishment!'"

"But, unfortunate one, my wife and I, who know the past, are worthy of our rank, and we love, we adore you."

"You have for me the blind tenderness of a father and a mother."

"And all the good you have done since your abode here—this beautiful and holy institution, this asylum opened by you to orphans and poor abandoned girls—those admirable cares of intelligence and devotion with which you watch over them—your insisting that they call themselves *your sisters*—wishing that they should call you so, since, in fact, you treat them as such, is this nothing to atone for faults which were not your own? Finally, the affection which is shown for you by the worthy abbess of Saint Hermangilda, who did not know you till after your arrival here—do you not owe it altogether to the elevation of your mind, the beauty of your soul, and your sincere piety?"

"While the praises from the abbess are addressed only to my present conduct, I enjoy them without scruple, my father; but when she quotes my example to the noble ladies who are engaged in religious offices in the abbey—when they see in me a model of all the virtues, I am ready to die of confusion, as if I were the accomplice of a wicked falsehood."

After a long silence, Rudolf resumed, with deep dejection,

"I see—I must despair of persuading you: reason is weak when opposed to a conviction, the more firm because it has its source in a generous and elevated sentiment. Since every moment you throw back a look on the past, the contrast between these remembrances and your present position must be, indeed, a continual punishment to you. Pardon me in turn, poor child."

"You, my good father, ask pardon of me, for what? Good heaven, what?"

"For not having foreseen your susceptibility. From the exceeding delicacy of your heart, I ought to have divined it; and yet, what could I do? It was my duty solemnly to acknowledge you as my daughter. Then this respect, of which the homage is so painful to you, comes of necessity to surround you. Yes; but I was wrong in one point. I have been, do you see, too proud of you—I have wished too much to enjoy the charms of your beauty—those charms of the mind which surprised every one who approached you. I ought to have hidden my treasure—to have lived almost in retirement with Clemence and you; I should have renouncedthese fetes—these numerous receptions, at which I loved so much to see you shine, thinking, foolishly, to elevate you so high—so high, that the past would disappear entirely from your eyes. But, alas! the reverse has taken place, and, as you have told me, the more elevated you have been, the deeper and more dark has seemed the abyss from which I drew you. Yet once again, it is my fault. I meant, however, to do right; but I was mistaken," said Rudolf, drying his eyes, "But I was mistaken; and then I supposed myself pardoned too soon. The vengeance of God was not satisfied; it still pursues me in the unhappiness of my daughter!"

A discreet knock at the door of the saloon which adjoined the oratory of Fleur de Marie interrupted this sad conversation.

Rudolf rose, and half opened the door, He saw Murphy, who said,

"I ask pardon of your royal highness for disturbing you, but a courier from Prince Herkausen-Oldenzaal has just brought a letter, which, he says, is very important, and must be delivered immediately to your royal highness."

"Thank you, my good Murphy; do not go away," said Rudolf, with a sigh; "presently I shall want to talk with you."

And the prince, having shut the door, remained a moment in the saloon, to read the letter which Murphy had just brought him. It was in these words:

"My Lord,

"May I hope that the ties of relationship which attach me to your royal highness, and the friendship with which you have always deigned to honour me, will excuse me for a proceeding which might be considered very rash, if it was not imposed by the conscience of an honest man.

"It is fifteen months, my lord, since you returned from France, bringing with you a daughter, so much the more beloved because you had thought her for ever lost, while, on the contrary, she had never quitted her mother, whom you married at Paris *in extremis*, in order to legitimatize the birth of the Princess Amelia, who is thus the equal of the other princesses of the Germanic Confederation.

"Her birth is, therefore, sovereign, her beauty is incomparable, her heart is as worthy of her birth, as her mind is worthy of her beauty, as my sister, the Abbess of Saint Hermangilda, has written me. The abbess, as you know, has often the honour of seeing this well-beloved daughter of your royal highness.

"During the time which my son passed at Gerolstein he saw, almost every day, the Princess Amelia; he loves her desperately, but he has always concealed this passion.

"I have thought it my duty, my lord, to inform you of this circumstance. You have deigned, as a father, to receive my son, and have invited him to the bosom of your family, and to live in that intimacy which was so precious to him. I should fail in loyalty to your highness if I dissimulated a circumstance which modified the reception which was reserved for my son.

"I know that it would be madness in us to dare hope to ally ourselves more nearly to the family of your royal highness.

"I know that the daughter of whom you have so good a right to be proud may aspire to a higher destiny.

"But I know, also, that you are the most tender of fathers, and that if you ever judged my son worthy of belonging to you, and of contributing to the happiness of the Princess Amelia, you would not be deterred by the grave disproportion which places such a fortune beyond our hopes.

"It is not for me to make a eulogium of Henry, my lord, but I appeal to the encouragement and to the praise you have so often condescended to bestow on him.

"I dare not, and I cannot say more to you, my lord; my emotion is too profound.

"Whatever may be your determination, believe that we shall submit to it with respect, and that I shall be always faithful to the sentiments of the most profound devotion with which I have the honour to be,

"Your royal highness's most humble and obedient servant, GUSTAVUS PAUL,

"Prince of Herkausen-Oldenzaal."

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER reading the prince's letter Rudolf remained for some time sad and thoughtful; a ray of hope then lightened up his face; he returned to his daughter, on whom Clemence was vainly lavishing the most tender consolations.

"My child, you have yourself said it was heaven's will that this day should be one of solemn explanations," said Rudolf to Fleur de Marie; "I did not anticipate a new and grave circumstance which was to justify your words."

"To what does it refer, father?"

"My dear, what is it?"

"New causes of fear!"

"For you."

"For me?"

"You have confessed to us but half your troubles, my poor child."

"Be so kind as to explain yourself, my father," said Fleur de Marie, blushing.

"Now I can do it; I could not sooner, not knowing how much you despaired of your fate. Listen, my beloved daughter! You believe yourself, or, rather, you are, very unhappy. When, at the beginning of our conversation, you spoke to me of the hopes which remained to you, I understood—my heart was broken, for I was to part with you for ever—that I was to see you shut yourself up in a cloister—to see you descend living to a tomb. Is it your wish to enter a convent?"

"Father!"

"My child, is this true?"

"Yes, if you will permit me to do it," replied Fleur de Marie, with a stifled voice.

"Leave us!" cried Clemence.

"The Abbey of Saint Hermangilda is very near Gerolstein. I shall often see you and father."

"Do you consider that such vows are eternal, my dear child? you are only eighteen years old, and perhaps some day—"

"Oh, I shall never repent the resolution I have taken. I shall never find repose and forgetfulness but in the solitude of the cloister, if you, my father, and you, my second mother, continue your affection to me."

"The duties and consolations of a religious life might, indeed," said Rudolf, "if they could not heal, at least, calm the sorrows of your poor depressed and distracted spirit. And though half the happiness of my life is the forfeit, I may perhaps, approve your resolution. I know what you suffer, and I do not say that renouncing the world may not be the fatally logical end of your sorrowful existence."

"What, you also, Rudolf," cried Clemence.

"Permit me, my dear, to express all my thoughts," replied Rudolf. Then addressing his daughter, "But before taking this last determination, we must examine if there may not be other prospects for the future, more agreeable to your wishes and ours. In this case, I should not regard any sacrifice, if I could secure you such a future existence."

Fleur de Marie and Clemence started with surprise. Rudolf continued, fixing his eyes on his daughter,

"What do you think of your cousin Henry?" After a moment of hesitation, she threw herself weeping into the arms of the prince.

"You love him, my poor child?"

"You never asked me, father," replied Fleur de Marie, drying her tears.

"My dear, we were not deceived," said Clemence.

"So you love him," added Rudolf, taking his daughter's hands in his own, "you love him well, my dear child?"

"Oh if you knew," replied Fleur de Marie, "how much it has cost me to hide from you the sentiment as soon as I discovered it in my heart —alas, at the least question from you, I should have owned everything. But shame restrained me, and would always have restrained me."

"And do you think that Henry knows your love for him?" said Rudolf.

"Great heaven, father, I do not think so," cried Fleur de Marie, in terror.

"And do you think he loves you?"

"No, father, no—oh, I hope not—he would suffer too much."

"And how did this love come, my beloved angel?"

"Alas, almost without my knowing it—you remember the picture of the page?"

"Which is in the apartment of the Abbess of Saint Hermangilda—it was Henry's portrait.'

"Yes, dear father, believing this to be a painting of the another age, one day in your presence, I did not conceal from the superior that I was struck with the beauty of this portrait. You said to me then, in jest, that the picture represented one of our relations of the olden time, who, when very young, had displayed great courage and excellent qualities. The grace of this figure, joined to what you told me of the noble character of this relative, added yet to my first impression. From that day, I often took pleasure in recalling this portrait, and that without the least scruple, believing that it belonged to one of my cousins long since dead. Little by little I habituated myself to these gentle thoughts, knowing that it was not permitted me to love on this earth," added Fleur de Marie with a heart-rending expression, and her tears bursting forth anew. "I gave to these romantic reveries a sort of melancholy interest, half smiles, half tears. I looked upon the pretty page of the past time as a lover beyond the grave, whom I should perhaps one day meet in eternity. It seemed to me that such a love was alone worthy of a heart which belonged entirely to you, my father. But pardon me these sad, childish imaginations."

"Nothing can be more touching, on the contrary, poor child," said Clemence.

"Now," replied Rudolf, "I understand why you one day reproached me with an air of regret for having deceived you about the picture."

"Alas, yes, dear father. Judge of my confusion when, afterward, the superior informed me that this picture was that of her nephew, one of our relations. Then my trouble was extreme; I endeavoured to forget my first impressions, but the more I endeavoured, the more they became rooted in my heart, in consequence even of the perseverance of my efforts. Unfortunately, yet, I often hear you, dear father, praising the heart, the mind, the character of Prince Henry."

"You already loved him, my dear child, even when you had as yet seen only his portrait, and heard of his rare qualities!"

"Without loving him, I felt towards him an attraction, for which I bitterly reproached myself. But I consoled myself by thinking that no one in the world would know this sad secret, which covered me with shame in mine own eyes. To dare to love, me, me, and then not be contented with your tenderness and that of my second mother. Did I not owe to you enough to employ all my strength, all the resources of my heart in loving you both? Oh, believe me, among the reproaches I made myself, these last were the most painful. Finally, I saw my cousin for the first time, at that grand fete you gave to the Archduchess Sophia. Prince Henry resembled his portrait in such a striking manner, that I recognised him immediately. The same evening, dear father, you presented my cousin to me, authorizing between us the intimacy which our relationship permitted."

"And soon you loved each other?"

"Ah, my father, he expressed his respect, his attachment, his admiration, with so much eloquence; you had yourself told me so much good of him."

"He deserved it; there is no more elevated character; there is no better or braver heart."

"Your pardon, dear father, do not praise him so much; I am already so unhappy."

"And I must convince you of all the rare qualities of your cousin. What I say surprises you; I understand it, my child—go on."

"I felt the danger that I incurred in seeing Prince Henry every day, and yet I could not withdraw myself from the danger. Notwithstanding my blind confidence in you, dear father, I dared not express my fears to you. I directed all my courage to concealing my love; how-

ever, I own to you, dear father, notwithstanding my remorse, often in this fraternal intimacy of every day, forgetting the past, I felt gleams of happiness till then unknown to me, but followed soon, alas! by dark despair, when I again fell under the influence of my sad recollections. For, alas! if they pursued me in the midst of the homage and respect of persons almost indifferent to me, judge, judge, dear father, of my tortures when Prince Henry lavished on me the most delicate praises, followed me with such frank and pious adoration; putting, as he said, the brotherly attachment that he felt for me under the holy protection of his mother whom he lost when he was very young. I endeavoured to merit this sweet name of sister, which he bestowed upon me, by advising my cousin respecting his future prospects, according to my weak knowledge; by interesting myself in all which related to him; by promising always to ask of you such assistance for him as you might be able to give. But often, also, what torments have I felt, how I have restrained my tears when, by chance, Prince Henry interrogated me about my infancy, my early youth. Oh! to deceive—always to deceive, always to fear, always to lie, always to tremble, before the inexorable look of one's judge. Oh! my father, I was guilty, I know it; I had no right to love; but I expiated this sad love by many bitter sorrows. What shall I say to you? The departure of the Prince Henry, in causing me a new and violent chagrin, enlightened me—I saw that I loved him more than I imagined. Thus," added Fleur de Marie, with deep dejection, and as if this confession had exhausted her strength, "I should have soon made you this avowal, for this fatal love has filled up the measure of my sufferings. Say, now that you know all, my father, is there any future prospect for me but that of the cloister?"

"There is another, my child; yes, and this future is as sweet, as smiling, as happy, as the other is dark and gloomy."

"What do you say, dear father?"

"Hear me in my turn. You must feel that I love you too much, that my tenderness is too clearsighted, to have allowed your love and that of Henry to have escaped me; at the end of a few days I was certain that he loved you, more even, perhaps, than you loved him."

"My father, no, no; it is impossible; he does not love me at this time."

"He loves you, I tell you; he loves you passionately, to madness, almost."

"Oh! heaven!"

"Listen farther. When I told you that pleasantry about the picture I did not know that Henry was about to visit his aunt at Gerolstein. When he came I yielded to the inclination I have always felt towards him; I invited him to come and see us often. I had before always treated him like my son; I changed in no degree my manner towards him. At the end of some days, Clemence and myself no longer doubted the regard you felt for each other. If your position was painful, my poor child, mine was not less so, it was extremely delicate. As a father, knowing the rare and excellent qualities of Henry, I could not but be profoundly happy at your attachment, for I could never have dreamed of a husband more worthy of you."

"Ah! dear father, pity, pity!"

"But, as a man of honour, I thought of the sad past life of my child. Thus, far from encouraging the hopes of Henry, I gave him, in several conversations, advice absolutely contradictory from what he would have expected from me if I had thought of giving him your hand. In such a situation, one so delicate, as a father and a man of honour, it was incumbent on me to keep a rigorous neutrality, not to encourage the love of your cousin, but to treat him with the same affability as formerly. You have been hitherto so unhappy, my beloved child, that seeing you, so to speak, reviving under the impulse of this noble and pure love, I could not for anything in the world have deprived you of its divine and rare joys. Admitting even that this love must afterward be broken off, you would at least have known some days of innocent happiness, and then, finally, this love might secure your future repose."

"My repose?"

"Listen again. The father of Henry, Prince Paul, has just written to me—here is his letter. Though he regards this alliance as an unhoped-for favour, he asks of me your hand for his son, who, he says, feels for you the most respectful the most passionate love."

"Oh!" said Fleur de Marie, hiding her face in her hands, "I might have been so happy!"

"Courage, my well-beloved daughter; if you wish it, this happiness is yours," cried Rudolf, tenderly.

"Oh! never, never; do you forget?"

"I forget nothing; but if to-morrow you enter the convent, not only I lose you for ever, but you quit me for a life of tears and austerity. Oh! to *lose* you! to lose *you*! let me at least know that you are happy, and married to the man you love and who adores you."

"Married to him! Me, dear father!"

"Yes; but on condition that, immediately after your marriage, contracted here at night, without other witnesses than Murphy for you and Baron Graun for Henry, you shall both go to some tranquil retreat in Switzerland or Italy, to live unknown as wealthy citizens. Now, my beloved daughter, do you know why I resign myself to a separation from you? Do you know why I desire Henry to quit his title when he is out of Germany. It is because I am sure that, in the midst of a solitary happiness, concentrated in an existence deprived of all display, little by little you will forget this odious past, which is especially painful to you because it forms such a bitter contrast to the ceremonious homage with which you are constantly surrounded."

"Rudolf is right," cried Clemence: "alone with Henry, continually happy with his happiness and your own, you will no longer have

time to think, my dear child, of your former sorrows."

"Then, as it will be impossible for me to be long without seeing you, every year Clemence and I will go to visit you."

"And some day, when the wound of which you suffer, poor little angel, shall be healed, when you shall have found forgetfulness in happiness, and this moment will come sooner than you think, you will return to us, never to leave us."

"Forgetfulness in happiness," murmured Fleur de Marie, who, in spite of herself, was soothed by this enchanting vision.

"Yes, yes, my child," replied Clemence, "when at every moment of the day you see yourself blessed, respected, adored by the husband of your choice, by the man whose noble and generous heart your father has extolled to you a thousand times, shall you have leisure to think of the past, and even if you should think of it, why should the past sadden you? why should it prevent you from believing in the radiant felicity of your husband?"

"Finally it is true, for tell me, my child," replied Rudolf, who could scarcely restrain his tears at seeing that his daughter hesitated, "adored by your husband, when you shall have the knowledge and the proof of the happiness which he owes to you, what reproaches can you make yourself?"

"Father," said Fleur de Marie, forgetting the past for this ineffable hope, "can so much happiness be reserved for me?"

"Ah, I was sure of it," cried Rudolf, in an ecstasy of triumphant joy; "is there a father who wishes it, who cannot restore happiness to an adored child?"

"She merits so much that we ought to be heard, my friend," said Clemence, sharing the transport of her husband.

"To marry Henry, and some day to pass my whole life between him, my second mother, and my father," replied Fleur de Marie, yielding more and more to the sweet intoxication of her thoughts."

"Yes, my beloved angel, we shall all be happy. I will reply to Henry's father that I consent to the marriage," cried Rudolf, pressing Fleur de Marie in his arms with indescribable emotion. "Take courage, our separation will be short; the new duties which your marriage will impose upon you will confirm your steps still more in the path of forgetfulness and felicity in which you will henceforth tread, for finally, if you should one day be a mother, it would not be only for yourself that it would be necessary you should be happy."

"Ah!" cried Fleur de Marie, with a heart-rending cry, for this word *mother* awoke her from the enchanting dream which was lulling her. "Mother? me! Oh, never! I am unworthy that holy name; I should die with shame before my child, if I had not died with shame before its father in making him the avowal of the past."

"What does she say, gracious Heaven!" cried Rudolf, stunned by the abrupt change.

"I a mother!" resumed Fleur de Marie, with bitter despair, "I respected, I blessed by an innocent and pure child, I formerly the object of everybody's scorn, I profane thus the sacred name of mother? Oh, never! miserable thing that I was to allow myself to be drawn away to an unworthy hope."

"My daughter, listen to me in pity."

Fleur de Marie stood upright, pale, and beautiful, in the majesty of incurable misfortune.

"My father, we forget that before marrying me, Prince Henry must know my past life."

"I have not forgotten it," cried Rudolf. "He must know all, he shall know all."

"And would you not rather see me die than see me so degraded in his eyes?"

"But he shall also know what an irresistible fatality plunged you into the abyss. He shall know your restoration."

"And he will finally feel," replied Clemence, pressing Fleur de Marie in her arms, "that when I call you my daughter, he may without shame call you his wife."

"And I, mother, I love Prince Henry too much, I esteem him too much ever to give him a hand which has been touched by the ruffians of the city."

* * * * *

A short time after this sad scene, the official Gazette of Gerolstein contained the following announcement

"Yesterday took place, at the Grand-ducal Abbey of Saint Hermangilda, in presence of his royal highness the reigning Grand Duke and all the court, the taking of the veil by the very high and most puissant princess, her Royal Highness Amelia of Gerolstein.

"The novice was received by the most illustrious and most reverend Lord Charles Maximilian, archbishop-duke of Oppenheim; Lord Hannibal, Andre Montano, of the Princes of Delpha, Bishop of Ceuta *in partibus infidelium* and apostolic nuncio, gave the salutation and the Papal benediction.

"The sermon was pronounced by the most Reverend Lord Peter von Asfeld, canon of the Chapter of Cologne, count of the holy Roman Empire—VENI CREATOR OPTIME."

CHAPTER VII.

THE PROFESSION.

Rudolf to Clemence.

Gerolstein, Jan. 12, 1842.*

IN assuring me to-day of the complete restoration of your father's health, my dear, you give me reason to hope that you can, by the end of the week, bring him back here. I foresaw that in the residence at Rosenfeld, situated in the midst of forests, he would be exposed, notwithstand-

* About six months have passed since Fleur de Marie entered St. Hermangilda Abbey as a novice.

ing all possible precaution, to the severity of our cold; unfortunately, his passion for hunting rendered our advice useless. I conjure you, Clemence, as soon as your father can bear the motion of the carriage, to set out immediately, quit that wild country and wild dwelling, only habitable for those old Germans of iron frame, whose race has disappeared.

I fear lest you should also fall sick: the fatigues of this hurried journey, the anxiety which preyed upon you until you reached your father, all these causes must have affected you sadly. Why could I not accompany you?

Clemence, I beg of you, be not imprudent; I know how bold and how devoted you are. I know how anxiously you will attend to your father; but he will be as much in despair as myself if your health should be impaired by this journey. I deplore doubly the illness of the count, for it takes you from me at a moment when I could have drawn deeply up from the fountain of consolation of your tenderness.

The ceremony of the profession of our poor child is fixed for to-morrow—to-morrow, the 13th of January, fatal epoch. It was upon the thirteenth of January that I drew the sword against my father!

Ah! my friend, I too soon thought myself forgiven. The intoxicating hope of passing my life with you and my daughter made me forget that it was not myself, but that it was she who had been punished thus far, and that my punishment was still to come.

And it did come—when, six months since, the unhappy one unveiled to us the double torment of her heart; "her incurable shame at the past, added to her unhappy love for Henry."

These two bitter and burning sensations, the one heightened by the other by a fatal logic, caused her to take up the unconquerable resolution to take the veil. You know, my dear friend, how, in combating this design with all the strength of our adoration for her, we could not deny that her worthy and courageous conduct should have been ours. How could we answer those terrible words?

"I love Prince Henry too well to give him a hand which has been touched by the ruffians of the City."

She was obliged to sacrifice herself to her noble scruples, to the ineffaceable remembrance of her shame; she has done it valiantly; she has renounced the splendours of the world; she has descended from the steps of a throne to kneel, clothed in sackcloth, upon the pavement of a church; she crossed her hands upon her breast, bowed her angelic head, and her beautiful fair locks, which I loved so much, and which I preserve as a treasure, fell, cut off by the sharp iron.

Oh! my friend, you know our heart-rending emotion at this mournful and solemn moment; this emotion is, even now, as poignant as at the time. In writing these words to you, I weep like a child.

* * * * * * *

I saw her this morning; although she seemed to me less pale than usual, and declares she does not suffer, her health makes me anxious. Alas! when under the veil and band which surround her noble forehead, I see her attenuated features, which have the cold whiteness of marble, and which make her large blue eyes seem larger still, I cannot help dreaming over the gentle and pure splendour with which her beauty sparkled at our marriage. Never did she look so charming. Our happiness seemed to radiate from her beautiful countenance.

As I told you, I saw her this morning; she has not been informed that Princess Juliana voluntarily resigns in her favour the dignity of abbess; to-morrow, therefore, on the day of her profession, our child will be elected abbess, as there is a unanimous desire among the noble ladies of the community to confer upon her this dignity.

Since the beginning of her novitiate, there has been but one opinion of her piety, charity, and religious exactness in fulfilling all the duties of her order, whose austerities she exaggerates most unfortunately. She has exercised in this convent the influence which she exercises everywhere without attempting to do so, and in ignorance of the fact which increases her power.

Her conversation this morning confirmed my doubts. She has not found in the solitude of the cloister, and in the severe practice of monastic duties, repose and forgetfulness. She congratulated herself, however, upon her resolution, which she considers the accomplishment of an imperious duty; but she suffers continually, for she is not formed for those mystical contemplations, in the midst of which, certain people, forgetting all affection, all earthly remembrances, are lost in ascetic delights.

No; Fleur de Marie believes, prays, submits herself to the rigorous and harsh observance of her order; she pours out the most evangelical consolations, the most humble cares upon the poor sick women who are taken care of in the hospital of the abbey. She has even refused the assistance of a lay sister for the moderate care of that cold and bare cell where we remarked, with such sad astonishment, you remember, my dear friend, the dried branches of her little rose-bush, suspended beneath her crucifix. She is, indeed, the cherished example, the venerated model of the community. But she confessed to me this morning, while bitterly reproaching herself for this weakness, that she is not so much absorbed by the duties and austerities of a religious life as to prevent the past from constantly appearing before her, not only as it was, but as it might have been.

"I blame myself for it, my father," said she to me, with that calm and gentle resignation which you know belongs to her, "I blame myself, but I cannot help often thinking that if God had spared me the degradation which has withered for ever my future life, I might have lived always near you, beloved by the husband of your choice. In spite of myself, my life is divided between these grievous regrets and the

frightful recollections of the City; in vain I pray to God to free me from these frightful recollections, to fill my heart alone with pious love for him, with holy hopes: in short, to take me entirely to himself, since I wish to give myself entirely to him. He does not grant my prayers—undoubtedly because earthly thoughts render me unworthy to enter into communion with him."

"But then," cried I, seized with a foolish glimmering of hope, "there is still time—to-day your novitiate ends; but it is not until to-morrow that your solemn profession will take place; you are still free—renounce this rude and austere life, which does not afford you the consolation you expected; if you must suffer, come and suffer in our arms: let our tenderness assuage your sorrows."

Shaking sadly her head, she answered me, with that inflexible justness of reasoning which has so often struck us,

"It is true, my dear father, the solitude of this cloister is sad for me—for me already accustomed to your kindness every moment. It is true, I am pursued with bitter regrets and grievous recollections; but, at least, I have the consciousness of fulfilling a duty; I understand, I know, that everywhere but here I should be out of place; I should again be in that cruelly false position in which I have already suffered so much both for myself and for you—for I, too, am proud. Your daughter shall be such as she ought to be; shall do what she ought to do; shall suffer what she ought to suffer. To-morrow all will know from what a slough you have rescued me; in seeing the repentant at the foot of the cross, they will, perhaps, pardon the past in consideration of my present humility. It would not be so my dear father, if they saw me, as a few months ago, shining in the midst of the splendours of your court. Besides, to satisfy the just and severe demands of the world, will satisfy myself; and I am grateful to God with all the power of my soul, when I think that *He alone* can offer to your daughter an asylum and position worthy of her and of you: a position, in short, which shall not form a sad contrast to my former degradation, and in which I can deserve the only respect which is due to me, that which is granted to repentance and sincere humility."

Alas; Clemence, what could I reply to that?

Fatality! fatality! for this unfortunate child is endowed, so to speak, with an inexorable logic in all that concerns the sensitiveness o the heart and one's honour. With such a min l and soul, one cannot think of palliatiug or hiding false positions—we must suffer the imperious consequences.

I left her, as usual, with a breaking heart.

Without founding the least hope upon this interview, which will be the last before her profession, I said to myself, "To-day she might renounce the cloister." But you see, my dear friend, her will is irrevocable, and I must indeed agree her, and repeat her words:

"God alone can offer her an asylum and a position worthy of her and of me."

Once more, her resolution is admirably logical, and suited to the position in society in which we are placed. With Fleur de Marie's exquisite sensibility, no other condition was possible for her. But I have often told you, my friend, if sacred duties, more sacred still than those of family, did not detain me in the midst of a people, who love me, and to whom I stand, in a slight degree, in the place of Providence, I should go away with you, my daughter, Henry, and Murphy, to live happily and obscurely in some unknown retreat. Then, far from the imperious laws of a society which is powerless to cure the evils which it has caused, we might have forced this unhappy child into happiness and forgetfulness. While here, in the midst of splendour, of ceremony, as restrained as this, it was impossible. But still, once more, fatality! fatality! I cannot abdicate my power without compromising the happiness of this people, who rely upon me. Brave and worthy people! how little do they know how much their happiness costs me!

Adieu, a tender adieu, my beloved Clemence. It is a consolation to me to see you as afflicted as myself at the fate of my child, for thus I can say *our* sorrow, and there is no egotism in my suffering.

Sometimes I ask myself, with fear, what would become of me without you, in the midst of such grievous circumstances? Often these thoughts make me still more sad at Fleur de Marie's fate; for you remain to me, you. But for her who is there?

Adieu, a sad adieu, my dear, good angel of unhappy days. Come back soon; this absence weighs upon you as well as me.

My life and love to you! soul and heart to you! R.

I send you this letter by a courier: in case of any unexpected change, I will despatch to you another immediately after the sad ceremony. A thousand wishes and hopes to your father for the establishment of his health. I forgot to give you intelligence of poor Henry; his state of health is better, and no longer gives us such anxiety. His excellent father, himself ill, has recovered strength to take care of Henry, to watch over him; a miracle of paternal love—which does not astonish us—the rest of us.

Thus, my dear friend, to-morrow—to-morrow—fatal and unpropitious day for me.

Yours for ever, R.

Abbey of St. Hermangilda,
4 o'clock in the morning.

Calm yourself, dear Clemence, calm yourself; although the hour in which I write this letter, and the place whence it is dated, might alarm you.

Thanks to heaven, the danger is past but the crisis was terrible.

Yesterday, after having written to you, agitated by a fatal presentiment, in recalling to myself the paleness and appearance of suf-

fering in my daughter, the state of weakness in which she had languished for some time, remembering, in short, that she was to pass in prayer, in a large, icy-cold church, almost all the night before her profession, I sent Murphy and David to the abbey to ask the Princess Juliana to permit them to remain, until to-morrow, in the outer house which Henry usually inhabited. Thus, my daughter could have prompt assistance, and I could have intelligence if, as I feared, strength should fail her to accomplish this rigorous, I will not say cruel, obligation to remain a January night in prayer in the excessive cold. I had also written to Fleur de Marie, that while I respected the exercise of her religious duties, I begged her to take care of her health, and to pass the evening in prayer in her cell, and not in the church. This is the letter she sent in reply:

"My dear father, I thank you deeply, and with all my heart, for this new and tender proof of your interest; have no anxiety, I believe I am in the way of accomplishing my duty. Your daughter, my dear father, can show neither fear nor weakness. Such are the rules; I must conform to them. If some physical sufferings result from it, with joy do I offer them to God! You will approve it, I hope; you, who have always practised renunciation and duty with so much courage. Farewell, my dear father. I will not say I am going to pray for you. When I pray to God, I always pray for you, for it is impossible to prevent mingling you with the divinity I implore; you have been to me on earth what God, if I deserve it, will be to me in heaven.

"Deign this evening to bless in thought your daughter, my dear father. To-morrow she will be the bride of the Lord.

"She kisses your hand with pious respect.

"SISTER AMELIA."

This letter, which I could not read without shedding tears, reassured me, however, but little; I, too, must pass a sad evening. Night having come, I went to shut myself up in the pavilion which I have had built not far from the monument erected to my father's memory, in expiation of that fatal night.

Towards one o'clock in the morning, I heard Murphy's voice; I shuddered with alarm; he had come in haste from the convent.

How shall I tell you, my friend? As I had foreseen, the unfortunate child, notwithstanding her courage and strong will, had not strength to accomplish entirely the barbarous custom, which it had been impossible for the Princess Juliana to dispense with, as the rules on this subject were precise.

At eight o'clock in the evening, Fleur de Marie kneeled down on the stone pavement in the church. Until midnight she continued praying. But at this hour, overcome by her weakness, the horrible cold, and her emotion, for she wept long and silently, she fainted. Two nuns, who by the Princess Juliana's order, had watched with her, took her up, and carried her to her cell.

David was immediately called. Murphy came in a carriage to seek me; I flew to the convent; I was received by Princess Juliana. She told me that David feared the sight of me would make too great an impression upon my daughter; that her fainting, from which she had recovered, presented nothing very alarming, having been only caused by great weakness.

At first a horrible dread seized me. I feared they wished to hide from me some great misfortune, or, at least to prepare me to hear it; but the superior said to me, "I assure you, my lord, the Princess Amelia is out of danger; a simple cordial which Dr. David gave her has restored her strength."

I could not doubt what the abbess affirmed; I believed her, and awaited intelligence from my daughter with sad impatience.

At the end of a quarter of an hour David returned. Thanks to Heaven, she was better; and she had desired to continue her watching and prayers in the church, consenting only to kneel upon a cushion. And as I resisted, and was indignant that the superior should have granted her request, adding that I formally opposed myself to it, he replied to me that it would have been dangerous to contradict the wishes of my daughter at a time when she was under the influence of a strong nervous emotion; and, besides, he had agreed with Princess Juliana that the poor child should quit the church at the hour of matins to take a little repose, and prepare for the ceremony.

"She is now in church, then?" said I to him.

"Yes, my lord, but in half an hour she will have quitted it."

I caused myself to be conducted to the north gallery, from which the whole choir of the church can be seen.

There, in the midst of the darkness of this vast church, only illuminated by the pale light of the lamp from the chancel, I saw her near the grating on her knees, her hands joined, and praying with fervour.

I also knelt, and thought of my child.

Three o'clock struck; two sisters who were seated, but who had not moved their eyes from her, went and whispered to her. In a few moments she made a sign, got up, and crossed the church with a firm step—although, my friend, when she passed under the lamp, her countenance appeared to me as white as the long veil which floated around her.

I also went out of the gallery, intending at first to go to meet her, but I feared a new emotion would prevent her from taking a few moments' repose. I sent David to learn how she was; he came back to tell me she felt better, and intended to try to sleep a little.

I remain at the abbey, for the ceremony which will take place to-morrow.

I think now, my friend, it is useless to send you this incomplete letter. I shall finish it to-morrow by relating the events of that sad day.

Until then farewell, my friend. I am worn out with grief. Pity me.

CHAPTER LAST.

THE THIRTEENTH OF JANUARY.

Rudolf to Clemence.

THIRTEENTH OF JANUARY — an anniversary now doubly dreadful ! ! !

My friend, we are losing her for ever !

All is over—all !

Listen to the story !

It is indeed true, there is an atrocious pleasure in relating a horrible grief.

Yesterday I bewailed the chance which retained you away from me. To-day, Clemence, I congratulate myself that you are not here ; you would suffer too much.

This morning—I had hardly slept through the night—I was awakened by the sound of the bells ; I groaned with terror ; it seemed to me funereal, a funeral knell.

In fact, my daughter is dead to us—dead : do you hear, Clemence, from this day you must begin to wear mourning for her in your heart—in your heart, so filled with maternal affection for her.

Is our child buried under the marble of a tomb or under the vaults of a cloister — for us what is the difference ?

From this day, do you understand, Clemence, we must regard her as dead. Besides, she is so very weak ; her health, impaired by so much sorrow, by so many shocks, is so feeble. Why not that other death, still more complete ? Fate is not weary.

And then, besides after my letter yesterday, you may understand that it would perhaps be more happy for her if she were dead.

DEAD ! The four letters have a singular appearance, do you not think so ? when one writes them in reference to an idolized daughter, a daughter so fair, so charming, of such angelic goodness, scarcely eighteen, and yet dead to the world !

Indeed, for us and for her, why vegetate in suffering in the gloomy tranquillity of this cloister ? Of what importance that she lives, if she is lost to us—she might have loved life so much — what a fatality has attended her !

What I am saying is horrible ! there is a barbarous egotism in paternal love.

At noon her profession took place with solemn pomp.

Hidden behind the curtains of our gallery, I was present at it.

I felt, over again, but with still more intensity, all those poignant emotions which we suffered at her novitiate.

A singular thing, she is adored : it is generally believed that she is drawn towards a religious life by an irresistible call ; her profession might be looked upon as a happy event for her, and yet on the contrary, an overpowering sadness weighs down the whole assembly.

At the end of the church, among the people, I saw two officers of my guard, old, hardy soldiers, hold down their heads and weep.

There seemed to be in the act a sad presentiment. If there was foundation for it, it has been but half realized.

The profession terminated, our child was brought back into the hall of the chapter, where the nomination of the new abbess was to take place.

Thanks to my privilege as sovereign, I went into this hall to await the return of Fleur de Marie.

She soon entered.

Her emotion, her weakness was so great, that two sisters supported her.

I was alarmed, less even by her paleness and the deep alteration of her features than by the expression of her smile : it seemed to me marked by a sort of secret satisfaction.

Clemence, I say to you, perhaps soon we shall need all our courage—much courage—I *feel*, so to speak, *within me* that our child is struck with death !

After all, her life would be so unhappy. Here is the second time that, in thinking the death of my daughter possible, I have said that death would put an end to her cruel existence. This idea is a horrible symptom ; but if sorrow must strike us, it is better to be prepared, is it not, Clemence ?

To prepare one's self for such a misfortune to taste little by little beforehand that slow anguish—it is an unheard-of refinement of grief. It is a thousand times more dreadful than to have the blow fall unexpectedly ; at least the stupor, the annihilation would spare one a part of this cutting anguish.

But the customs of compassion prescribe to us a *preparation*. Probably I should never act otherwise myself, my poor friend, if I had to acquaint you with the sad event of which I speak to you. Thus be alarmed, if you observe that I speak to you of *her* with the delicacy, the caution of desperate sadness, after having announced to you that I do not feel serious inquietude respecting her health.

Yes, be alarmed, if I speak to you as I am writing now, for though I left her, to finish this letter, an hour ago, in a tolerably calm state, I repeat it to you, Clemence, I seem to *feel within me* that she suffers more than she appears to do. Heaven grant that I deceive myself, and that I take for presentiments the despairing sadness which this melancholy ceremony inspires.

Fleur de Marie then entered the large hall of the chapel.

All the stalls were occupied by the nuns.

She went modestly to take the lowest place on the left, supporting herself on the arm of one of the sisters, for she still seemed very weak.

At the upper end of the hall the Princess

Juliana was seated, the grand prioress beside her; on the other hand a second dignitary, holding in her hand the golden cross, the symbol of the authority of the abbess.

A profound silence prevailed. The princess arose, took her cross in her hand, and said, with a serious tone and an expression of much emotion,

"My dear daughters, my great age obliges me to confide to younger hands this emblem of my spiritual power," and she showed her cross. "I am authorized to do it by a bull of our holy father; I will present, then, to the benediction of my Lord Archbishop of Oppenheim, and to the approbation of his royal highness the granduke, our sovereign, and to yours, my dear daughters, the one of your number whom you have designated to succeed me. Our grand prioress will make known to you the result of the election, and to the person whom you shall have elected I will deliver up my cross and ring."

I never moved my eyes from my daughter. Standing in her stall, her two hands crossed on her bosom, her eyes cast down, half enveloped in her white veil, and the long descending folds of her black robe, she remained immovable and thoughtful; she had never for a moment supposed that she could be chosen: her elevation had been only confided to me by the abbess.

The grand prioress took a register and read:

"Each of our dear sisters having been, according to rule, invited, eight days since, to place their votes in the hands of our holy mother, and mutually to keep secret their choice until this moment, in the name of our holy mother, I declare, that one of you, my dear sisters, has, by her exemplary piety, by her evangelical virtues, merited the unanimous suffrage of the community; and this is our Sister Amelia, during her lifetime the most high and puissant Princess of Gerolstein."

At these words, a sort of murmur of sweet surprise and happy satisfaction passed round the hall; the looks of all the nuns were fixed upon my daughter, with an expression of tender sympathy. Notwithstanding my all-engrossing anxieties, I was myself deeply moved with this nomination, which, made separately and secretly, offered, nevertheless, a touching unanimity.

Fleur de Marie, astounded, became still more pale; her kness trembled so much that she was obliged to support herself with one hand on the side of the stall.

The abbess spoke again, with a very clear, but grave voice:

"My dear daughters, is it indeed Sister Amelia whom you consider most worthy and most deserving of all of you? Is it indeed she whom you acknowledge as your spiritual superior? Let each of you in turn answer me, my dear daughters."

And each nun answered, in a loud tone,

"I have voluntarily and freely chosen, and I do choose Sister Amelia for my holy mother and superior."

Overpowered with an inexpressible emotion, my poor child fell on her knees, joined her hands, and so remained till every vote was given.

Then the abbess, placing the cross and ring in the hands of the grand prioress, advanced towards my daughter, to take her by the hand and lead her to the seat of the abbess.

My dear, my love, I have interrupted myself a moment. I must take courage and finish the relation of this heart-rending scene.

"Rise, my dear daughter," said the abbess to her; 'Come to take the place which belongs to you; your evangelical virtues, and not your rank, have gained it for you."

Saying these words, the venerable princess bent towards my daughter to assist her to rise.

Fleur de Marie took a few trembling steps, then arriving in the middle of the hall of the chapter, she stopped and said, with a voice the calmness and firmness of which astonished me,

"Pardon me, holy mother, I would speak to my sisters."

"Ascend first, my dear daughter, your seat as abbess," said the princess; "it is from thence that you must let them hear your voice."

"That place, holy mother, cannot be mine," replied Fleur de Marie, with a low and trembling voice.

"What do you say, my dear daughter?"

"Such a high dignity is not made for me, holy mother."

"But the voices of your sisters call you to it."

"Permit me, holy mother, to make here on my knees a solemn confesiion; my sisters will see, and you also, holy mother, that the most humble condition is not humble enough for me."

"Your modesty misleads you, my dear daughter," said the superior, with kindness, believing in fact, that the unfortunate child was yielding to a feeling of exaggerated modesty; but I, I divined those confessions which Fleur de Marie was about to make. Seized with horror I cried out with a supplicating voice,

"My child, I conjure you—"

At these words, to tell you, my friend, all that I read in the profound look which Fleur de Marie cast upon me, would be impossible. As you will see directly, she had understood me—yes, she had understood that I should partake in the shame of this horrible revelation: she understood that, after such a revelation, I might be accused of falsehood, for I had always left it to be believed that Fleur de Marie had never left her mother.

At this thought the poor child believed herself guilty of the blackest ingratitude towards me. She had not strength to go on—she was silent, and held down her head from exhaustion.

"Yet once again, my dear daughter," resumed the abbess, "your modesty deceives you; the unanimity of your sisters' choice proves to you how worthy you are to take my place. If you have taken part in the pleasures of the world, your renouncing these pleasures is but

the more meritorious. It is not her royal Highness Princess Amelia who is chosen—it is *Sister Amelia*. For us, your life began when you entered this house of the Lord, and it is this example and holy life which we recompense. I say to you, moreover, my dear daughter, that if before entering this retreat your life had been as guilty as it has been, on the contrary, pure and praiseworthy, that the angelic virtues of which you have given us the example since your abode here would expiate and redeem, in the eyes of the Lord, any past life, however guilty it may have been. After this, my daughter, judge if your modesty ought not to be assured."

These words of the abbess were the more precious to Fleur de Marie, inasmuch as she believed the past ineffaceable. Unfortunately, this scene had deeply distressed her, and though she affected calmness and firmness, it seemed to me that her countenance changed in an alarming manner. Twice she groaned as she passed her poor emaciated hand over her forehead.

"I think I have convinced you, my dear daughter," resumed the Princess Juliana, "and you would not cause your sisters a severe pain by refusing this mark of their confidence and their affection."

"No, holy mother," said she, with an expression which struck me, and with a voice becoming weaker and weaker, "I *now* think I may accept it. But as I feel greatly fatigued and somewhat ill, if you will permit it, holy mother, the ceremony of my consecration shall not take place for a few days."

"It shall be as you desire, my dear daughter; but while we wait till your office shall be blessed and consecrated, take this ring: come to your place; our dear sisters will render you their homage, according to the rules."

I saw at every moment, her emotion increasing, her countenance changing more and more; finally, this scene was beyond her strength; she fainted before the procession of the sisters was finished.

Judge of my terror; we carried her into the apartment of the abbess.

David had not left the convent; he hastened and bestowed the first cares upon her. Oh that he may not have deceived me; he assures me that this new accident was caused only by extreme weakness occasioned by the fastings, the fatigues, and the privation of sleep which my daughter has imposed upon herself during her novitiate.

I believed him, because, in fact, her angelic features, though of a frightful paleness, did not betray any suffering; when she recovered her consciousness, I was even struck with the serenity which shone on her forehead. It seems to me that she was concealing the secret hope of an approaching deliverance.

The superior having returned to the chapter to close the session, I remained alone with my daughter.

"My good father, can you forget my ingratitude? Can you forget that, at the moment I was about to make this painful confession, you asked me to spare you!"

"Oh! do not speak of it, I supplicate you."

"And I had not dreamed," continued she, with bitterness, "that in saying, in the face of all, from what an abyss of degradation you had drawn me, I was revealing a secret that you had kept out of tenderness to me; it was to accuse you publicly, you, my father, of a dissimulation to which you had resigned yourself only to secure to me a brilliant and honoured existence. Oh! can you pardon me?"

Instead of answering her, I pressed my lips upon her forehead; she felt my tears flow.

After having kissed my hands several times, she said to me,

"Now I feel better, my good father, now that I am, as our rules say, here, and dead to the world. I should wish to make some dispositions in favour of several persons, but as all I possess is yours, will you authorize me, my good father?"

"Can you doubt it? but I beseech you," said I to her, "do not indulge these sad thoughts; by-and-by you shall employ yourself in this duty; you have time enough."

"Undoubtedly, my good father, I have yet much time to live," added she, with an accent that, I know not why, made me shudder. I looked at her more attentively; but no change in her features justified my uneasiness. "Yes, I have yet much time to live," resumed she, "but I must not occupy myself longer with terrestrial things, for to-day I renounce all which attached me to the world. I beseech you, do not refuse me."

"Direct me: I will do everything you wish."

"I should wish that my tender mother would always keep in the little back parlour where she usually sits, my embroidery frame, with the tapestry I have begun in it."

"Your wishes shall be fulfilled, my child: your room has remained exactly as it was the day you left the palace; for everything belonging to you is an object of religious worship to us. Clemence will be deeply touched at your remembrance of her."

"As to you, my good father, take, I beg you, my large ebony chair, in which I have thought, and dreamed so much."

"It shall be placed by the side of mine in my working cabinet, and I shall see you in it every day, seated beside me, as you so often used to sit." Could I tell her this, and restrain my tears?

"Now I should wish to leave some memorials of me to those who took so much interest in me when I was unfortunate. To Madam Georges I should like to give my writing-desk, of which I have lately made use. This gift will be appropriate," added she, with a sweet smile, "for it was she at the farm who began to teach me to write. As to the venerable curate of Bouqueval, who instructed me in religion, I destine for him the beautiful Christ in my oratory."

"Good, my child."

"I should like to send my bandeau of pearls to good little Rigolette. It is a simple orna-

ment that she can wear on her beautiful black hair; and then, if it were possible, since you know where Martial and La Louve are, in Algiers, I should wish that the courageous woman, who once saved my life, should have my enamelled cross. These different pledges of remembrance, my good father, I should wish to to have sent to them *from Fleur de Marie.*"

"I will execute your wishes; have you forgotten none?"

"I believe not, my good father."

"Think carefully: among those who love you, is there not some one very unhappy—as unhappy as your mother and myself; some one finally, who regrets as deeply as we do your entrance into the convent?"

The poor child understood me; she pressed my hand; a slight blush coloured for a moment her pale face.

Anticipating a question which she feared, undoubtedly to ask me, I said to her, "He is better; they no longer fear for his life."

"And his father?"

"He feels the improvement in the health of his son—he, too, is better. And to Henry, what will you give? A remembrance from you will be such a dear, such a precious consolation to him."

"My father, offer him my praying-desk. Alas! I have often watered it with my tears, in begging of Heaven strength to forget Henry, since I was not worthy of his love."

"How happy he will be to see that you had a thought for him!"

"The Asylum for Orphans and young women abandoned by their relations, I should desire, my good father—"

Here Rudolf's letter was interrupted by the following words, which were almost illegible.

Clemence, Murphy will finish this letter: I have no longer any mind—I am distracted. Oh, the thirteenth of January!!!

The conclusion of this letter, in the handwriting of Murphy, was thus conceived.

"YOUR HIGHNESS,

In obedience to the orders of his royal highness, I complete this sad recital. The two letters of my lord must have prepared your royal highness for the overwhelming news which it remains to me to acquaint you with.

It was three o'clock; my lord was employed in writing to your royal highness; I was waiting in a neighbouring apartment until he should give me the letter, to forward it immediately by a courier. Suddenly I saw the Princess Juliana enter with an air of consternation. "Where is his royal highness?" said she to me with a voice filled with emotion. "Princess, my lord is writing to the grand-duchess the news of the day." "Sir Walter, you must inform my lord—a terrible event. You are his friend, be so kind as to inform him; from you the blow will be less terrible."

"I understood everything; I thought it more prudent to take this sad revelation upon myself, the superior having added that the Princess Amelia was slowly sinking away, and that my lord must hasten to receive the last sighs of his daughter. I unfortunately had not time to take any precautions. I entered the saloon; his royal highness perceived my paleness. "You have come to acquaint me of some misfortune." "An irreparable misfortune, my lord—courage." "Ah, my presentiments!" cried he, and, without adding a word, he ran to the cloister. I followed him.

From the apartment of the superior, the Princess Amelia had been transported into her cell after her last interview with my lord. One of the sisters was watching by her; at the end of an hour she perceived that the voice of the Princess Amelia, who spoke to her at intervals, was becoming weaker, and that she was more distressed. The sister hastened to inform the superior; Dr. David was called; he hoped to remedy this new loss of strength by a cordial, but it was vain; the pulse was scarcely perceptible; he saw, with despair, that reiterated emotions had probably exhausted the strength of the Princess Amelia; there remained no hope of saving her.

It was then that my lord arrived. Princess Amelia had just received the last sacrament: a ray of intellligence still lingered about her; in one of her hands, crossed on her bosom was the *remains of her little rosebush.*

My lord fell on his knees by her pillow: he sobbed, "My daughter, my beloved child," cried he, in a heart-rending tone.

The Princess Amelia heard him, turned her head gently towards him, opened her eyes, endeavoured to smile, and said, with a feeble voice,

"My good father, pardon—Henry also — my good mother—forgive."

Such were her last words!

After an hour of silent agony, she gave up her spirit to God.

When his daughter had yielded up her last sigh, my lord did not say a word; his calmness was frightful; he closed the eyes of the princess, kissed her forehead again and again, took piously the remains of the little rosebush, and left the cell.

I followed him; he returned to the house without the cloister, and showing me the letter that he had begun to write to your royal highness, and to which he in vain attempted to add some words, for his hand trembled convulsively, he said to me,

"It is impossible for me to write. I am distraught, my mind is gone. Write to the grand-duchess that I no longer have a daughter!"

I have executed the orders of my lord.

Permit me, as his oldest servant, to beseech your royal highness to hasten your return as soon as the health of the Count d'Orbigny will permit it. The presence of your royal highness alone can calm the despair of the prince. He wishes to watch every night by his daughter till the day when she shall be buried in the grand-ducal chapel.

I have accomplished my sad task, madam;

be so kind as to excuse the incoherence of this letter, and accept the expression of respectful devotion with which I have the honour to be your royal highness's very obedient servant,

WALTER MURPHY.

* * * * * * *

The night before the funeral service of the Princess Amelia, Clemence arrived at Gerolstein, with her father.

Rudolf was not alone the day of the funeral of Fleur de Marie.

THE END.

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